



# AMERICAN WOMEN DURING WORLD WAR II

AN ENCYCLOPEDIA



ROUTLEDGE

**Doris Weatherford**

# AMERICAN WOMEN DURING WORLD WAR II

World War II was a conflict that affected every American. Young and old, soldier and civilian, each person had a part to play in the national defense. *American Women during World War II: An Encyclopedia* documents the lives and wartime contributions of American women in a handy A–Z format. The book describes the efforts of women in official and semi-official military organizations, as well as the millions of women who worked in civilian defense industries, from aircraft maintenance to munitions manufacturing, and much more.

Biographical entries bring to life the struggles of American women serving in the British armed forces prior to the creation of U.S. military units for women, while other entries explicate the experience of American women caught in Japanese attacks on Asian cities that took place years before Pearl Harbor. The collection is illustrated with 137 rarely-seen images, and each entry is cross-referenced and includes a guide to further reading on the topic.

Discussing crucial events of the war on the homefront and on the battlefield, and describing institutional changes in everything from schools and hospitals to religion and the workplace, *American Women during World War II* provides a handy one-volume collection of information and images suitable for any public or professional library.



# AMERICAN WOMEN DURING WORLD WAR II

An Encyclopedia

*Doris Weatherford*



## Cover Image Credits

African-American Red Cross workers hand out doughnuts and coffee to tank personnel overseas. *Courtesy of American Red Cross*

Navy nurses, outfitted in fur-lined parkas, gloves, and boots, stationed at the 1st Naval Air Station Dispensary, Attu, Alaska, November 1943. *Courtesy of Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

War correspondents type their dispatches, to be cabled to their home newspapers, in France in July 1944, the month after D-Day. From left to right: Virginia Irwin, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*; Marjorie Avery, *Detroit Free Press*; and Judy Barber, *New York Sun*. Note the pup tent in the background which constitutes a home. *U.S. Army Signal Corps Photo, Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

American women packing "Bundles for Britain" for use by civilians whose homes had been bombed by Germany before the U.S. entered the war. The newspaper used as cushioning indicates that these bundles likely contained glass bottles of medicines. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

Army nurses put on their gas masks after the gas has been released during an actual test, Fort Knox, Kentucky, 1945. *Courtesy of U.S. Army Signal Corps Photo, Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

Women, with hoe and rake in hand, modeling two types of uniforms worn by the Women's Land Army when planting and harvesting war food crops. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

Wong Ruth Moy, who survived Japan's bombing of Canton, works in a Los Angeles aircraft factory in 1943. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

An Army flight nurse supervises the loading of a patient aboard an evacuation aircraft in Burma. These young women did an outstanding job in a new and difficult role. *Courtesy of Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

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# Contents

List of Entries	vii
Introduction	xi
Entries A–Z	1–510
Bibliography	511
Index	519



# List of Entries

## A

absenteeism  
Adams, Charity Edna (later Earley)  
adolescence  
advertising  
African-American women  
aircraft workers  
Air WACs  
Alaskan women  
All-American Girls Professional Baseball League  
allotments  
American Nurses' Association  
American Women's Voluntary Services  
Anderson, Elda Emma  
Anderson, Mary  
Army Nurse Corps  
artists  
Association of Army and Navy Wives  
Austin-Wadsworth Bill  
Avenger Field  
aviators, civilian  
"Axis Sally"

## B

Balch, Emily Greene  
Bandel, Betty  
bands, military  
Barringer, Emily Dunning  
Bataan  
Bellanca, Dorothy Jacobs  
Benedict, Ruth Fulton  
benefits, military  
best sellers/books by women  
Bethune, Mary Jane McLeod  
birth control/birth rate  
Blanchfield, Florence Aby  
Blue Star Mothers of America  
Bolton Act  
Bolton, Frances Payne Bingham  
bond sales  
Bonney, Mabel Therese  
boom towns/population movement  
Bourke-White, Margaret  
Boyce, Westray Battle

Breckinridge, Mary Marvin  
British women/American women in Britain  
Brown, Mary-Agnes  
Bubley, Esther  
Buck, Pearl Sydenstricker  
Bundles for Britain  
Business and Professional Women's Clubs

## C

Cadet Nurse Corps  
camp followers  
Caraway, Hattie Wyatt  
censorship and secrecy  
Chiang Kai-Shek, Madame (Soong Mei-ling)  
child care  
children/motherhood  
Child, Julia McWilliams  
Chinese-American women  
cigarette industry  
Civil Air Patrol  
Civil Defense, Office of  
Cochran, Jacqueline  
colleges  
conservation  
Corregidor  
correspondents, war  
courtship/dating  
Craighill, Margaret  
cryptographers

## D

Dauser, Sue Sophia  
Davis, Emily Claire  
Davis, Fanny-Fern Smith  
Daytona Beach WAC Training Center  
D-Day  
decorations and medals  
defense industries  
demobilization  
Des Moines, Fort  
Dewson, Molly  
dieticians  
divorce rates/law

## LIST OF ENTRIES

Dogs for Defense  
domestic workers  
Douglas, Emily Taft  
Douglas, Helen Gahagan  
draft  
drama  
dress, changes in

### E

electronics industry  
employers/employment changes  
enemies/enemy aliens  
enlistment standards  
Equal Rights Amendment  
European Theater of Operations

### F

fatalities  
Fleeson, Doris  
flight nurses  
Flikke, Julia O.  
food, shortages/production changes  
Fort, Cornelia  
French women/American women in France

### G

Gardener, Julia Ann  
Gellhorn, Martha  
Gerry, Eloise  
G.I. Bill of Rights  
Gildersleeve, Virginia Crocheron  
Glaser, Erica  
Gold Star Mothers  
Goodwin, Katherine  
Gould, Beatrice  
“government girls”

### H

Hall, Florence  
Hall, Virginia  
Hallaren, Mary Agnes  
Hancock, Joy Bright  
Harriman, Florence Jaffrey Hurst (“Daisy”)  
Hawai  
Herrick, Elinore Morehouse  
Hickey, Margaret Wynne  
Hickok, Lorena  
Hiett, Helen  
Higgins, Marguerite  
Hill, Blanche Wilbur  
Hispanic women

hoarding  
Hobby, Oveta Culp  
Hogan, Rosemary  
Hokinson, Helen Elna  
home economics  
home nursing  
Hopper, Grace Brewster Murray  
hospitals  
housework  
housing

### I

inflation  
intelligence, military

### J

Japanese-American women  
Jensen, Agnes  
Jewish-American women  
jury duty

### K

Kahn, Rep. Florence Prag  
Kent, Helen Greene  
keypunch operators  
Kirchwey, Freda  
Kirkpatrick, Helen  
kitchen police  
Knopf, Blanche Wolf  
Kuhn, Irene Corbally

### L

labor force  
LaMarr, Hedy  
landladies  
Langdon, Grace  
Lange, Dorothea Margareta  
lawyers, female  
layoffs  
League of Women Voters  
Lee, Hazel Ah Ying  
Lee, Rose Hum  
lesbianism  
letter writing  
“Link Ladies”  
Little Church Around the Corner  
Love, Nancy Harkness  
Luce, Clare Boothe  
Lutz, Alma



**M**

*Maasdam*  
 magazines  
 males, comparisons with  
 Manhattan Project  
 Marine Corps/Women Marines  
 marriage  
 McAfee, Mildred  
 military occupational speciality  
 motor pools  
 movies  
 munitions  
 music

**N**

National Youth Administration  
 Native-American women  
 Navy Nurse Corps  
 North Africa  
 Norton, Mary Teresa Hopkins  
 nurses/nursing  
 Nurses Selective Service Bill of 1945

**O**

occupied Germany  
 occupied Japan  
 Office of Price Administration  
 Office of War Information  
 opposition to the war

**P**

Pacific Theater of Operations  
 pay  
 Pearl Harbor  
 Perkins, Frances  
 physicians  
 posters  
 postwar  
 pregnancy  
 prisoners of war  
 prostitution  
 psychologists

**Q**

Quartermaster Corps

**R**

radio  
 rank, military

rationing  
 recreation  
 recruitment  
 Red Cross  
 refugees  
 Rogers, Representative Edith Nourse  
 Roosevelt, Anna Eleanor  
 Rosenberg, Anna Marie Lederer  
 “Rosie the Riveter”  
 Russian women

**S**

scientific research and development  
 sexual harassment  
 shipbuilding industry  
 Signal Corps  
 “slander campaign”  
 Smedley, Agnes  
 Smith, Margaret Madeline Chase  
 SPARS  
 spies/espionage  
 Stratton, Dorothy C.  
 Strayhorn, Elizabeth Cherry  
 Streeter, Ruth Cheney  
 strikes  
 Sullivan, Alleta

**T**

teachers  
 telephone operators  
 Thompson, Dorothy  
 “Tokyo Rose”  
 travel  
 Travelers Aid

**U**

underutilization  
 uniforms  
 unions  
 United Nations  
 USO (United Services Organization)

**V**

V-E Day  
 V-J Day  
 venereal disease  
 veterans  
 victory gardens  
 V-Mail  
 volunteers

## LIST OF ENTRIES

### W

WAFS (Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron)  
waitresses  
Wallace, Lila Bell Acheson  
war brides  
War Cake  
War Manpower Commission  
WASP (Women Airforce Service Pilots)  
WAVES  
weddings  
widows  
Wilson, Anna W.  
wives of servicemen  
Women Ordnance Worker (WOW)

Women's Armed Services Integration Act  
Women's Army Auxiliary Corps/Women's Army Corps  
(WAAC/WAC)  
Women's International League for Peace and Freedom  
Women's Land Army (WLA)

### Y

Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)

### Z

Zeller, Verina

# Introduction

I have been reading and writing and thinking about women and World War II for most of four decades. It began when I was very young and joined NOW, the National Organization for Women. At a meeting of our chapter on Massachusetts' South Shore, two women who were appreciably older than the rest of us got into a rather heated argument about whether the WAC or the WAVES was the superior women's military corps. Neither I nor anyone else my age had a clue about this.

Our NOW chapter is no longer extant (and I've lived in Florida for three decades), but we built a child care center that still is extant. This happened partly because of another older woman, who told us that the child care centers were routine at coastal shipyards during World War II. Again, that was news to us: no one ever told us that this particular wheel, so important to employed women, already had been invented—and almost literally in our own backyard. I resolved that when I finished my first book, *Foreign and Female: Immigrant Women in America, 1840–1930*, I would explore World War II.

I learned some things, and in 1995, the Council on America's Military Past invited me to speak at their annual convention. The several hundred people who attended were overwhelmingly male, and most were high-ranking officers who had added graduate degrees in history to their credentials. Frankly, I was nervous and feared they would accuse me of overstating the case for women. Dread swept over me when hands shot up as soon as I stopped talking. The president called on the highest-ranking man first, a two-star admiral. "You didn't say enough about the Navy Nurse Corps," he began; "my wife was in the Navy Nurse Corps, and they ..." Not a negative word was said. Instead, every man was eager to point out more positive things about women, things that they had not thought about in a while. It was clear that this knowledge was in the backs of brains, and they just needed prompting to pull it out.

It is silence, indeed, as well as a lack of big-picture thinking, that causes the exclusion of women in historic narratives, not malice—and certainly not a lack of material. Sharing such information was the aim of the California-based National Women's History Project (NWHP) when it began in the 1980s. Because of the dedication of these women, almost everyone now knows that March is Women's History Month. I served as a board member of NWHP, as well as of the National Women's History Museum (NWHM).

Again, it was World War II that was the connection: NWHM, chartered in 1996, did an exhibit on "Rosie the Riveter" as an example of the many topics that should be included in public history. NWHM, based in Washington, D.C., is getting closer to its goal of building such a museum on or near the National Mall.

Somewhat earlier, I had become a charter member of Women in Military Service to America, Inc. I've never served in the military (and indeed, marched with my husband, a former Army officer, in demonstrations against the Vietnam war), but I am proud to be associated with WIMSA and especially its founder, retired Air Force Brigadier General Wilma Vaught. If limited to one person who has done the most to honor the women of World War II, I believe that General Vaught is the singular best choice.

The memorial that she and WIMSA built in Arlington National Cemetery and especially their archives have been invaluable sources of information for many years. Longtime curator Britta Granrud and former historian Judith Belafaire routinely answered my questions, and their library feels like a second home. They have done an excellent job of assembling rare books from the era, as well as recent memoirs—and I am particularly grateful for the latter. Literally dozens of World War II women recently have found their voices and published their wartime experience, sometimes at their own expense. Without expectation of reward, they sat down and worked through their memories of times that often were physically hard and emotionally difficult. You will find many such titles in the bibliography.

Sharing wartime experience remains important because, despite the hard work of many feminists, both male and female, much of the public remains ignorant of the many contributions that women have made throughout American history. Most people probably know more about the World War II era than any other—but much of that is filtered through the rose-colored lens of Hollywood. Movies and music have created a wartime image in many minds, but the devil always is in the details and Hollywood's details usually are foggy. The aim of this book is to provide information that too often is lacking—and especially to add detail on topics and individual women too often overlooked.

A few examples: As recently as the Persian Gulf War, television commentators breathlessly worried about the possibility of female prisoners of war—making obvious their ignorance of the fact that thousands of American women were

## INTRODUCTION

interned in Japanese prison camps during World War II. You may find more about this by looking up “prisoners of war” or even “Alaskan women,” some of whom became POWs when Japan attacked the Aleutian islands. Reading that may prompt you to turn to “occupied Japan” or “occupied Germany” or “refugees.” The last entry, on women who fled fascism, could lead you to the “Manhattan Project,” where you will learn about women who worked on the atomic bomb, or to “psychologists,” a field in which refugee women joined with American women to promote that still-new profession.

Individual biographies provide role models literally from A to Z. “Adams, Charity” is on the most prominent African-American officer in the Women’s Army Corps, and “Zeller, Varina” offers an example of executive leadership; she commanded the new Air Force Nurse Corps in the post-war years. “Postwar” also is an entry, as is “Army Nurse Corps” and “Navy Nurse Corps,” as well as “nurses” and other specifics, such as “Cadet Nurse Corps.” The topical entries also include “YWCA.” The well-known organization did important wartime work with refugees and with women who, because of their ethnic heritage, fell into the category of “enemy aliens,” which is still another entry. The entries begin with “absenteeism”—and women’s record compared with that of men—and end with “Zeller, Varina.”

Several wartime congresswomen are profiled, including Mary T. Norton, who chaired the House Labor Committee when labor was a vital issue, and Edith Nourse Rogers, who sponsored the legislation that created the first non-nursing military corps. “Opposition to the war,” for example, contrasts Emily Taft Douglas, a liberal from Chicago, with her downstate colleague Jessie Sumner—who was so far to the right that she tried to postpone D-Day and declared that it “made no difference if Hitler or Stalin won” the war.

The views of other politically active women are included in such entries as “United Nations” and “Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom.” Some have individual biographies: did you know, for example, that Emily Greene Balch was the second American woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize? She followed her friend Jane Addams, who is known for her social work at Hull House—but opposed World War I, as did Balch. World War II was different, though, as Balch summarized: “Neutrality in the sense of treating the aggressor and the victim alike is morally impossible.”

Economic issues are tackled with such entries as “inflation” and its particular impact on women. That might lead you to look up “Office of Price Administration,” in which women routinely issued orders to storekeepers on “rationing.” That long entry leads to “dress,” “travel,” and especially “food,” all of which were affected by rationing. Many other entries center on economics, including “labor force,” “employer/employment changes,” “unions,” and “strikes.” “Defense industries” breaks down into further categories such as “aircraft workers,” “shipbuilding,” “munitions,” and the new “electronics industry”—and women had an important part in all.

Both economic and social issues are addressed in entries such as “advertising” and “allotments,” the money that the

military sent directly to soldiers’ families. “Boom towns,” too, addresses the economic and social issues that women faced when one in every five Americans moved during the war’s four years, often thousands of miles from their families. On the alphabet’s other end, “underutilization” is full of facts about women whose knowledge could have shortened the war had they been recognized. The “Austin-Wadsworth Bill” is on congressional attempts to draft women for industrial jobs—something that happened to “British women” and “Russian women.” “Nurses Selective Service Bill” will inform you on how women in that profession very nearly were drafted—a fact unknown to most debaters of the Equal Rights Amendment, which is still another entry.

Huge social change is reflected in “adolescence,” “birth control/birth rates,” “childhood,” “courtship,” “marriage,” “divorce,” “prostitution,” “pregnancy,” and “venereal disease.” Entries on “camp followers” and “wives of servicemen” demonstrate the difficulties faced by women barely out of high school who navigated their way into new worlds, despite official hostility towards them. “Government girls” explicates the same kind of young woman and her new life in the nation’s capital.

Cultural changes begin with an entry on “artists” and how women reflected the war in their art. “Bestsellers” follows in the next letter; it also covers literary awards. Did you know, for example, that the war years of 1942 and 1943 marked the first time ever that female historians won the Pulitzer Prize in consecutive years? Other cultural entries include “drama,” “music,” “movies;” you will find still more female pioneers in “radio.”

Commentators who wander in and out of various entries include Susan B. Anthony II, niece of the famed feminist, who published *Out of the Kitchen—And Into the War* (1943). The entry on war “correspondents” will introduce you to many women who followed combat and wrote with grace about the horror they saw. Among those who are quoted often and rate individual biographies are Margaret Bourke-White, *The Taste of War* (1985), Martha Gellhorn, *The Face of War* (1959), and Dorothy Thompson, who warned the world about Hitler in *Let the Record Speak* (1939).

Throughout the hundreds of entries, there are handy notations for “see also” and “references and further reading,” which will lead to related information both within and beyond the volume. In “spies/espionage,” for example, the “see also” suggests a look at “censorship and secrecy,” “cryptography,” and “intelligence, military,” as well as individual women who risked their lives to spy, including Virginia Hall and Erica Glaser. For “further reading,” you will find book titles such as *American Intelligence and the German Resistance to Hitler* that are specific to this topic.

Hitler, in fact, is another motivation for this book. He and other fascists believed that a woman’s place was in the home, limited to “*kinder, kirche, and kuchen*” (children, church, and kitchen), and that philosophy proved a fatal mistake. Both Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan thought that they could win the war with slave labor, including women, from

conquered peoples. They failed to understand that unwilling workers never could compete with motivated “soldiers of production.” The war was very much a battle of production: the winners were those with the most planes and ships, armor and ammunition. American women astonished the world with their eagerness to participate in building this materiel, and

they arguably provided the margin that defeated fascism. Without them, we might well be living in a world without free speech. This book and countless others would not have been published. We owe a great debt of gratitude to the women of World War II.







## ABSENTEEISM

The war years were a clear demarcation between eras when it was not quite respectable for middle-class women to be employed and when that became acceptable. Especially during the Great Depression immediately before the war, women were expected to leave paid jobs to men, who were assumed to be the breadwinner in every family. Although most African-American and immigrant women historically have always worked, the era's ideal was that "a woman's place was in the home." Because of those habits of thinking, a number of truisms were accepted by both men and women that since been have discarded. One was that women were frequently absent from work: they were not trained to be as dependable as men, and their family obligations came ahead of their paid work.

When it became clear, though, that defense jobs in aircraft manufacture, shipbuilding, munitions, and more were essential to victory, managers had no choice except to hire women. When they did, they found that the expected level of absenteeism did not occur—and especially that women worked harder and produced more in less time. It was Vultee, a manufacturer of pursuit planes, that first publicized this unexpected phenomenon, early in 1941 and well before U.S. entrance into the war. Production soared with women on the job, management told *Aviation* magazine, in some cases as much as 50 percent. The plant manager at southern California's Consolidated Aircraft also noticed the level of productivity. Women, he said, were "better than men ... They will stick on a tedious assembly line long after the men quit."

There certainly were good reasons why it was reasonable to believe that women were more likely to quit and to be absent: both paid work and house work were much harder then than now. A six-day work week was standard then, as

even non-essential businesses expected employees to work at least part of Saturdays. Moreover, it was an era without automatic washers or dryers, dishwashers or microwaves or freezers; there was no fast food, disposable diapers or permanent press clothing, and homemaking truly was a full-time occupation. Employed women who attempted to do it all found themselves exhausted, but few were as lazy or undependable as the media too often portrayed them. One poster on absenteeism, for example, displayed a soldier suffering in a prison camp, while an American woman bypassed her factory to go to the movies.

When right-wingers accused blue-collar workers of excessive absenteeism, Henry J. Kaiser coined a new word to put the issue in perspective—"presenteeism." He ran seven large shipyards on the northern Pacific coast that eventually built almost 1,500 vessels; most were "Liberty ships" that held the tons of cargo necessary to success in the Pacific Theater of Operations. Running twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, its workers—many of them women—drew national attention late in 1942, when they set a record by building the huge *Robert E. Peary* in only slightly more than one week. Susan B. Anthony II quoted Kaiser: "Talk about absenteeism has been grossly overdone ... The facts are that ... the *presenteeism* was 93 per cent ... with one yard turning out a freighter every other day." That rate of "presenteeism" was due primarily to Kaiser Industries' realistic thoughtfulness on child care and food service. The company became a model for others in this era prior to convenience foods and profit-making child-care businesses.

Defense worker Ruth Millard, who had better-than-average support at home, admitted that even she was occasionally but understandably absent from her 53-hour weekly job. "I can honestly say," she averred of her co-workers, "that not



Working a full day was a moral duty: failure to deliver war materiel could cost lives. *Courtesy of National Archives.*

one of us has ever stayed away from work to go shopping or go to the movies. Most of us have done it to sleep for about twenty hours... I agreed with [Labor] Secretary [Frances] Perkins, when she said that the greater portion of absenteeism was caused by overfatigue."

A European who was very much aware of the seriousness of the war, writer Josephine von Miklos, also investigated the issue of unjustified absenteeism. The most telling testimony she found was at a Connecticut shipyard, where she said, women were "out there ... in biting gales and icy planks... A hundred men walked out on one of those coldest days. The girls stuck."

Similar reports began to destroy the myth of female absenteeism and undependability—but that it had existed in the first place may have been based in the different realities of the traditional male and female worlds. Especially blue-collar men measured work by the time spent, while women measured it by tasks done. The much greater variations of housework made women count their days by shirts ironed, meals cooked, floors waxed—with the result that when they went to the factory, women measured productivity by the product made, not the time spent doing it. The resulting lesson remains a valuable one for enlightened management in a modern economy.

*See also:* African-American women; aircraft workers; child care; employment; food; defense industries; housework; labor force; males, comparisons with; munitions; Perkins, Frances; shipbuilding

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### ADAMS, CHARITY EDNA (LATER EARLEY) (1918–2002)

The first official African-American woman in the United States military, Charity Adams, was among the twenty-five women in the inaugural class of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC), when its first officers were trained at Fort Des Moines, Iowa. Alphabetical order meant that Adams was the first in her (all-black) platoon to be sworn in on July 30, 1942. She rose rapidly in rank, becoming a captain, a major, and then a lieutenant colonel before the war was over—just one step below the rank of the corps' top commander, a full colonel.

Adams grew up in Columbia, South Carolina, the oldest of four children born to her mother, a teacher, and her father, a Protestant minister. Although coastal South Carolina remained a highly segregated area, blacks there had been inspired by the 1919 example of African-American teacher Septima Poinsette Clark, who courageously gathered 10,000 petitions for better educational opportunity after World War I.

Valedictorian of her high school class, Adams entered Ohio's Wilberforce University, which had begun its reputation as an outstanding college for blacks prior to the Civil War. She graduated with a degree in math and physics, and then taught in Columbia's segregated schools for four years, while also pursuing a master's degree at Ohio State University in the summers.

Because WAAC director Oveta Culp Hobby was exceptional in her quest for well-qualified officers without regard to race, Adams received a letter in June 1942 inviting her to join the newly-formed military corps for women. Her outstanding record in that first class meant that she soon received her own command, as captain of the WAAC's Third Platoon. Segregation by both race and gender remained the policy of



Major Charity E. Adams inspects her troops on a cold day in the European Theater of Operations. *Courtesy of National Archives*

all military units during World War II, and the troops Adams' led were black women.

In addition to service at Fort Des Moines, Adams traveled to Washington, D.C., and did inspection tours in several states during 1943 and 1944. This travel was not without incident, however, as she was refused service on trains because of her race, and when she returned to South Carolina for a visit, Ku Klux Klan members briefly threatened her home. Her poise and sense of command enabled Adams to curtail these insults without major difficulty, and in December, 1944, she led the first black female soldiers overseas.

They landed in Glasgow, Scotland, and went on to Birmingham, England, where the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion that she commanded set records at delivering letters to the seven million troops in the European Theater of Operations. Adams led the 6888th in a victory parade in Paris at the war's end; their photograph as they passed under the Arc d'Triomphe has been frequently reproduced. When she left the service in March, 1946, Adams remained the highest-ranking black woman in the military.

She then finished her master's degree in vocational psychology at Ohio State; she worked for the Veterans Administration and for several colleges, including a Savannah college where she met and married Stanley A. Earley, Jr. They had two children and lived most of their lives in Dayton, Ohio. Her autobiography, which she published under the name of Earley, is *One Woman's Army: A Black Officer Remembers the WAC* (1989).

**See also:** African-American women; British women; European Theater of Operations; Fort Des Moines; Women's Army Auxiliary Corps

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## ADOLESCENCE

World War II had appreciable effect on adolescence, a concept that was itself relatively new; use of the word was still quite uncommon until the late nineteenth century. Today's typical teenage experience was far from standard in the early twentieth century, as high school was a privilege enjoyed only by a minority of Americans. Even when more teenagers began going to school instead of to work in the 1920s and 1930s, it was largely because they could not get jobs. Many states passed child labor laws during those years, partly with the intention of protecting young people from exploitive employers, but also because adults pressured lawmakers into forbidding the use of young workers who would take jobs away from older ones.

Thus the concept of adolescent years devoted to education and socialization was just beginning to be the norm in 1940, when the nation's first peacetime military draft, or Selective Service, changed everything, especially for males. Even aside from the crucial nature of making decisions on courtship and marriage during wartime, the normal socialization that is so important to adolescents was curtailed by war conditions, especially because of rationing.

When families had to conserve their tires and gasoline, for example, a rural mother worried: "We can't possibly make those extra trips, but what will Jeanne do without her dramatic work, and what about Paul and basketball practice?" Another said in *Parents* magazine:

Cissie and her gang have to go easy on the sugar cookies that they used to gobble up. Bud must apply to his ration board if he needs a bicycle for that after-school delivery job. Neither of them is allowed to poke at father's typewriter any more because father can't get another. The old inner tube is now too precious for fooling around in the lake and has probably been turned back to the Government.

While some media sympathized with the plight of youth, more headlines were devoted to another new concept, that of juvenile delinquency. "Every newspaper reader," wrote sociologist T. Sellin, "is aware of the fact that juvenile delinquency is believed to be increasing and that the war is to blame for it." Another expert, Eleanor S. Boll, pointed out that "in one mid-week edition of an evening newspaper, sixty motion-picture theaters advertised war films. Six comic strips dealt with the war and spy rings. Eight cartoons derived their humor from war. The radio timetable offered a nearly continuous succession of war thrillers."



Whether or not the war caused increased violence and delinquency—or even whether this increase was, in fact, real—continued to be debated throughout the era. What does seem to be true, however, was that during the war years, more girls joined boys in the ranks of official troublemakers. Already in the first full year of the war, the FBI reported that “55% more girls under twenty-one were arrested in 1942 than in 1941.” Sociologist Ray E. Baber wrote that in some of the nation’s counties:

The increase in delinquencies of girls (mostly sex offenses) ranged from 34 per cent to 94 per cent in 1942 over 1941. From all over the country come reports from social agencies of an increase in unwed mothers.... In one western city the average age of delinquent girls dropped from seventeen to between thirteen and fourteen.

Most of the “crimes” for which they got in trouble were more nearly moral offenses, but girls were charged with violations of the standards of their era, including being “incorrigible” or “ungovernable.” Many were cited for breaking curfews, limitations on nighttime hours that often were imposed solely on women and girls, usually in towns near military posts. Often—even usually—girls were the victims, not the offenders, in the changed sexual behavior that came with war, but they carried the burden of arrest, damaged reputations, and sometimes pregnancy—while the soldier with them was not similarly accountable.

Even the *Journal of Public Health* expressed concern about the larger issues troubling the era’s adolescents:

With war and identification with warriors, the inhibition and sublimation of destructive drives becomes more difficult... The child will not receive the same assurance ... that killing and mass violence is wrong ...

Now at a time when he is struggling for mastery over his body and soul, he is bombarded with the haunting insistence to live—to live fully and dangerously if necessary, for tomorrow may be too late.

The burden of solving these intractable problems largely was laid upon mothers, who somehow were supposed to make their children understand that fighting was wrong—while at the same time encouraging their teenage boys to aim towards that very goal. Women got little practical help with their adolescent children: media advice givers talked about the importance of male mentors, even though millions of such men were gone; they encouraged counseling at school, even though the nation’s psychologists were overwhelmed with soldiers wounded in their souls.

Migration of families during the war was another factor in changed adolescence. Millions of families were uprooted from farms and small towns, as both fathers and mothers went to work in defense industries on the coasts and in cities. Without friends or loyalty to school, too many adolescents emulated their parents and went to work, sometimes illegally. According to sociologist Eleanor Boll:

In the bustling defense areas,... they work in bowling alleys, poolrooms, theaters, stores,... The number one job

for girls is that of waitress and carhop in honky-tonks. They evade state laws in having no salary. They simply exchange services to customers for tips, and are free to come and go when they please.

Even when families stayed in the same place, the war and its recruitment needs meant societal approbation for dropping out of school. Families that only recently had become accustomed to teenagers in high school saw them leave without graduating during the war years, often with parental approval. Boys could go into the military with parental permission at age 17, and girls could go to work. Lured by good wages in defense industries and bored by book learning, the employment rate of teenage girls quadrupled.

It was a situation that would come back to haunt the nation in the postwar period, but only rarely then did anyone cite the war as a cause of increased delinquency and violence. Instead, most seemed to agree that the curtailment of adolescence during the war years produced more responsible young people—in fact “the greatest generation.”

**See also: boom towns; courtship; conservation; defense industries; draft; enlistment standards; marriage; rationing; recreation; spies; teachers**

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## ADVERTISING

The reality of World War II may have been better displayed in the era’s advertising than in any other form of communication. That is especially true of advertisements in magazines and newspapers: television had not yet reached American homes; movie theater advertising was generally was not cost



effective; and radio's message not only dissipated into the air, but also tended to be local and therefore more narrow. The pages of almost every periodical, however, convey the era's worries and wants.

Perhaps the most surprising thing to modern readers is the large quantity of advertisements for cigarettes and alcohol. This was a lesson that the government had learned with World War I, when prohibitionists took advantage of war fervor in 1918 to pass an amendment to the U.S. Constitution that effectively banned alcohol use everywhere in the nation. The "noble experiment" famously failed with the speakeasies and rampant crime of the Roaring Twenties, and it was repealed soon after President Franklin Roosevelt took office in 1933.

Prohibition had been a factor in his election, and the Roosevelt administration did not want a repetition of those attitudes in World War II. Indeed, the president's pre-dinner martini habit was well known, and he frequently was photographed with lighted tobacco in an elegant cigarette holder. Scientists of that era recognized little about the negatives of addictions, especially tobacco, and in fact, routine military practices portrayed tobacco and even alcohol as sedatives to help men cope. Clubs for both officers and enlisted men served alcohol, and Uncle Sam issued cigarettes along with chocolate bars as part of a soldier's regular rations.

Print ads showed that the grains and fruits fundamental to liquor were not subject even to conservation advice, let alone rationing. A shortage did exist of some imports, such as Scotch whiskey and European wines, but American distillers clearly saw this as an opportunity to promote their brands and to introduce new uses. The California Wine Advisory Board, for instance, promised "wine has a way with the foods of wartime." The board ran recipes for unrationed foods such as kidneys with red wine; calves brains with sauterne, and baked fish vin blanc.

Many more men than women smoked and drank in this era—and at the same time that advertising condoned these personal pleasures, it also called for wartime curtailment or even elimination of comforts that affected women more than men. The entire civilian rationing system depended on the cooperation of housewives, and most advertising on the subject was aimed at them. Thousands of ads told women how to rearrange their household management to do without everything from shoes to sugar.

Rationing ads had a tremendous range, as women were encouraged to do such things as go through the ashes of their cooking and heating stoves for unburned bits of coal. They were told to dust their light bulbs to provide more light at lower wattage. They were expected to keep the used grease from cooking fats and to donate it to local collection drives for ultimate use in explosives. All these changes to lifestyle were explained through advertising, much of it written by women who worked for the Office of War Information and donated by local radio and newspaper owners. The war very much promoted the idea of the PSA, or public service announcement.



This store window advertisement encouraged women to donate metal for recycling. *Courtesy of Franklin D. Roosevelt Library; Hyde Park, NY*

Even though they had no product to sell, other ads were paid for by the same corporations as in the past. Cannon, the giant linen manufacturer, was making tents instead of sheets, and to explain this and build brand loyalty for the postwar era, it ran a 1943 ad campaign in *Ladies Home Journal* that told women in patronizing detail how to ensure that their current bed linens lasted through the war. Because all sheets then were white and because clothes dryers did not yet exist, Cannon gave instructions on how to bleach, rinse, hang, and iron sheets.

Most ads aimed at women dealt with the fundamental of food, as advertising for that industry switched from selling products to explaining why they couldn't be sold. Many of these ads trivialized the genuine problems that housewives had with putting meals on the table, but some were thoughtful. Libby's, for example, anticipated complaints from disappointed Thanksgiving shoppers and ran a two-page explanatory ad in the November 1942 issue of *Good Housekeeping*. It showed the many factors that affected food supply, including even the internment of Japanese Americans in the Far West:

We've got to feed our fighting forces. We've got to help feed our allies ... Getting our crops harvested hasn't been easy. In many places help has been scarce, as on the Pacific Coast where alien field and orchards workers were moved away ... Before the war 86% of America's tin came from Malaya and the Dutch East Indies ...

For the Armed Forces and lend-lease [a program to help British and Russian allies], we packed millions of cases of food ... Uncle Sam gets 40% of our fruit cocktail...[and] practically all of our 1942 salmon catch. That tells you one big reason why you can't always find in stores just the Libby item you want.

Many ads were for new items that manufacturers hoped would replace the routine thing that was no longer available. Companies such as Libby's hired home economists to create and publicize new recipes, menus, and even entirely new products. Ultimately, though, it was the quality of the product, not the advertising, that caused women to change their purchasing practices. As canneries tried to avoid the use of tin, dehydration became the biggest food innovation of the war. Dried soup mixes proved a long-term popular change, but despite advertising, pumpkin flakes did not.

A second major category of wartime advertising was the recruitment ad. Some were aimed at men, but because the Selective Service could draft men, more ads were aimed at persuading women to volunteer—not just for the military, but also in a number of civilian areas. Much of this advertising was done in local newspapers and especially local radio because the needs were local. When, for example, there was an acute labor shortage in Seattle's aircraft factories at the beginning of the war, the first month of advertising on the city's radio stations found 2,200 women willing to take these non-traditional jobs.

Most labor recruitment ads featured patriotism, not personal benefit. In Virginia, for example, where Norfolk shipbuilders needed help from women, the response of Virginia Snow Wilkinson was typical of that of most housewives who made the transition to defense jobs:

Over and over for months I heard from the radio the call for women to enter war work. I had been delaying for one reason or another, but I finally recognized these arguments in favor of my going to the shipyards.

While radio advertising usually aimed at a local and specific industry, print ads encouraged the general trend in national publications that supported women who accepted employment outside of the home—something that remained controversial. One of the most poignant and effective of these ads showed starving prisoners of war, clinging to barbed wire and looking for help from beyond the seas. It would be a hard-hearted mother-in-law who would condemn her daughter-in-law for going to work after seeing such an ad.

Advertising agencies joined government agencies in campaigns that featured more than just print ads. Many towns held "Womanpower Days" with rallies, radio broadcasts, photographs of women in defense plants, and even movie reels. Posters also were an important form of advertising: in addition to the famed "Rosie the Riverter," dozens of others proclaimed such sentiments as "Victory is in Your Hands," "Shopgirl Attacks Nazis," and (trying to allay any nagging doubts) "War Workers Stay Womanly."

All of this attention to women unsettled some blue-collar men, and occasionally management used advertising to reas-

sure those who had somehow avoided the draft. Between the lines, such ads also made it clear that corporations would do little to avoid a hostile environment for the women whom they ostensibly wanted to recruit. Sociologist Katherine Glover, for example, cited this ad in a Buffalo newspaper:

Are you a tough guy? Have you got red fighting blood in your veins? Then here's a chance to do a vitally needed job in heavy war industry—a job that calls for a REAL TWO-FISTED HE-MAN! The pay is good. But more than that, you'll get the satisfaction of doing a job that's really important to winning this war! A JOB NO WOMAN CAN DO!

Nor was all advertising aimed at convincing women to take over "men's jobs." Many of the 60,000 women who moved to Washington, D.C., to work for various branches of the War Department during 1941–42, for example, were motivated by simple ads for tedious work that needed to be done. In 1941—before Pearl Harbor and before the military accepted women for non-nursing work—some two thousand women a month came to the nation's capital in response to advertising for typists and file clerks.

It would take tens of thousands of women to process the paperwork to keep track of millions of men, and the War Department exercised excellent judgment when it ran ads for such women primarily in midwestern publications. Their agricultural economies offered little female opportunity; their school systems were excellent; and their work ethic was strong. The military correctly predicted that these young women, or "Government Girls," would make superior employees.

On the other hand, ad men—and both advertising and public relations were relatively new industries dominated by men—badly misjudged their first campaign to persuade women to enlist in the military. They used a Hollywood glamour-girl approach that was heavy on sexual innuendo—something that appealed to them, but not to the educated, serious-minded woman who was the ostensible enlistment goal of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC). Instead of being a positive, this 1942 public relations campaign for the WAAC became a long-term negative. It was so off-target that even *Time*, which had helped create this image, apologized in 1943 to the women "who had endured the cheap jokes and poor public relations" of the corps' early history.

This initial recruitment advertising was so misguided that the military units for women that followed the WAAC—the Navy's WAVES, the Coast Guard's SPARS, and the Women Marines—ran virtually no major media advertising. This, too, doubtless was a mistake: instead of going from too much attention to none, advertising campaigns could have been reshaped to more truly hit their target, especially with thoughtful ads in magazines that women read.

Colonel Betty Bandel, who headed the WAC branch that dealt with the Army Air Force, finally sought and received permission to run her own campaign to recruit "Air WACs," and their image soon ranked best in public opinion. She understood that potential enlistees wanted less glamour and more assurance that sacrificing the best years of their young lives really would matter.

A final category of advertising was the postwar dream, which was aimed at all women. Because factories had been retooled to make weaponry, no new household appliances or other metal items were available during World War II. Newlyweds had to beg their families for pots and pans; they had to revert to wooden iceboxes instead of buying new refrigerators. To make this situation more tolerable and especially to encourage savings that would create a customer base when factories went back to making household materials, many large companies ran “dream ads” that showed their prototypes for postwar goods.

A Spring 1944 ad in *House and Garden* by Briggs, a Detroit plumbing manufacturer, for instance, acknowledged that its potential customer could not yet acquire the objects pictured and that she might be working in a defense factory. The ad copy showed a woman who had a pin-up plan for the future on her wall and said: “She looks at it when she leaves ... and again when she returns wearily from the war plant. *It’s her dream kitchen.*”

Beyond encouraging future sales, the ad also planted the idea that, of course, any normal woman would want to quit outside employment and return to the kitchen when the war ended. Indeed, a male writer for *Good Housekeeping* was not embarrassed to say already in 1943, midway through the war, that the postwar world would require an advertising “campaign to glorify the American homemaker. We will have to sell them on the idea of the home, just as we sold them the idea of going into war work.”

Aside from such unabashed manipulation of women’s lives, some advertisers’ product predictions in “dream ads” were stupendously wrong. One example pictured a car going down a highway on its own, guided by radar, while the man in the driver’s seat joined his wife and children in a card game. Others confidently predicted that everyone would fly a personal plane in the postwar world, just as everyone had learned to drive a car after the first world war.

As with these planes and cars, the advertisements that turned out to be most erroneous generally were those aimed at men, while ads that targeted women remained more practical and actually possible. Similarly, most advertising on conservation of things in short supply was aimed at women: they were told to save everything from old newspapers to the tin foil wrapped around chewing gum, while the liquor and tobacco ads—aimed primarily at men—rarely expressed any prudence whatsoever.

Many advertising executives also exploited the war to connect their product with it, however loosely the logic worked. Vitamin tablets, for example, were new in this era, and ads soon proclaimed them necessary to good health and that health was necessary to victory. Old products discovered new advertising justifications; California date growers, for example, promoted them as a substitute for scarce sugar. Indeed, the attitude of some ad agencies seemed to be that the war was a terrific new-account bonanza. They not only publicized the new as essential to victory, they repackaged old products with a new war message. An ad for Crane paper,

for example, pictured a woman in uniform writing a letter to her aunt and extolled the virtues of this quality stationery in these worrisome times.

Some advertisers of luxury products blatantly exploited the war, often by exaggerating the activities of their targeted wealthy women. “She’s doing grim, exhausting work these days,” said a 1944 ad in *House Beautiful*, “whether it’s hurrying to the hospital every morning or learning all over again how to cook ... And she needs to be pampered this Christmas. Mink, of course, is the ... gift ... priced from \$3500.” This was at a time when women working in defense plants earned about \$35 a week—or about two years salary for the cheapest mink. More seriously, the ad encouraged a lackadaisical volunteer to believe that she was as committed to the war as a front-line soldier.

Although some advertising portrayed the worldwide conflict as the great tragedy that it was, many more took a perky approach that emphasized hearty morale and trivialized genuine suffering. It was an “only in America” sort of enterprise: overseas, the homeless and hungry required no advertising to convince them of their genuine needs.

**See also:** aircraft workers; Air WACs; Bandel, Betty; British women; cigarettes; draft; “government girls”; hospitals; Japanese-American women; magazines; Office of War Information; Pearl Harbor; rationing; recruitment; Russian women; shipbuilding; Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps; Women’s Land Army

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## AFRICAN-AMERICAN WOMEN

The Civil War, from 1861 to 1865, brought the greatest historical change for African-American women, but almost exactly eighty years later, between 1941 and 1945, World War II began a second major evolution. The seeds of the modern civil rights movement were planted during then, and because the nation needed all its resources, the status of black women rose dramatically both on the home front and on the war front.

White women had joined the Army Nurse Corps (ANC) and the Navy Nurse Corps (NNC) since their beginnings early in the twentieth century, and the U.S. Navy and the Marine Corps enlisted white women towards the end of World War I, but no black women were admitted into the military until the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps began at the beginning of U.S. involvement in World War II.

Civil rights activists were wary of the WAAC's first director, Oveta Culp Hobby, because she was from the former Confederate state of Texas—and perhaps because they said so in the press, Hobby made a strong effort to include black women from the very beginning. In May 1942, when the first plans were being made for the new corps, *Newsweek* opined:



These well-dressed African-American women were recruits for the Women's Army Corps. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

Mrs. Hobby faces difficulties. The first was the accusation of racial discrimination in the appointment of a Southerner as director. She quelled it with the announcement that Negroes would be recruited in proportion to their numbers in the population.

She actually recruited somewhat more than that for the initial classes that trained the first officers. The WAAC (later WAC, or Women's Army Corps) sent its first enlistees to Iowa's Fort Des Moines in the summer of 1942—and one of the three platoons was made up of black women. Some, such as Charity Adams, were specially invited to join, while in contrast, hundreds of well-qualified white applicants initially were not accepted.

Indeed, few army units received the positive attention that went to Adams' 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion. The all-black detachment of 26 officers and 687 enlisted women was the first to go overseas, and when they arrived in 1943, residents of Birmingham, England, greeted them with a brass band and cheers. The group went on to Paris after its 1944 liberation and set speed records at its task of sorting letters to soldiers.

The other military services, however, did not emulate Hobby and the WAC. The Navy's WAVES, the Coast Guard's SPARS, and the Women Marines did not admit black women until late in the war. The older nursing corps also were very slow to open their ranks. Although there was a desperate need for nurses throughout the war, the ANC accepted only 330 of the 9,000 black graduate nurses that were available, while the NNC waited until 1945—the war's last year—before it enlisted its first black woman. Civilian nursing schools also lagged at accepting black students: in 1945, the last year of the war, they made up a mere 3 percent of total enrollment.

Even in the more liberal army, discrimination was real. Black women were assigned to segregated units commanded by black officers, and they lived in separate barracks. They also were more likely than whites to be assigned to traditional "women's work" such as laundry detail. Civil rights organizations repeated complained that "Negroes were being sent only to cooks and bakers school," and the WAC's top historian, Mattie Treadwell, agreed that indeed job assignments were "highly embarrassing."

Most black WACs were assigned to the giant Army Service Forces, which provided the rest of the Army with the essentials of food and clothing and was headed by Emily Claire Davis. The second-largest employer of black WACs was the Army Air Force, or AAF, headed by Betty Bandel. Today's Air Force did not yet exist as a separate organization, and the AAF, as the most modern of military bodies, offered the most opportunity to women. Because it requisitioned more women than any other body, the AAF got more black women along with white ones.

Some of them brought stellar abilities. Margaret Flint, a white woman who was an early and enthusiastic WAC enlistee at Fort Des Moines, appreciated the diversity she encountered. She couldn't imagine, she wrote, "circumstances under which one would meet and know at close

range a more varied assortment of women. One is a colored dental surgeon of many years' experience." Another white WAC candidly confessed that she never could have made it through the required mathematics without help from the daughter of her family's maid, a young black woman who was herself enlisted in the WAC.

At the same time, however, the WAC soon began to curtail its recruitment of black women—not because black women were failing to achieve WAC standards nor because the corps had all the women it wanted. Instead, because the Army's WAC was at least semi-integrated while the Navy's women's corps chose to ignore black applicants, total female enlistment in the Army was falling in comparison with the Navy. It appeared that many white women chose to join the WAVES, SPARS, or Women Marines because they encountered no black women there.

Even in the army, black women endured regular discrimination and underutilization. As late as 1944, when casualties mounted and the media cried for medical aides, the Surgeon General's office refused to accept these women "even as ward orderlies." Official WAC historian Mattie Treadwell quoted that office's awkward excuse for refusing black WACS: "no suitable accommodations exist for such personnel upon completion of training." The spokesman, however, went on to unconsciously acknowledge the hypocrisy of his position by adding, "further accumulation of surplus colored WAC enlisted women ... would constitute an increasing embarrassment."

If work life was segregated, socialization and entertainment was even more so. A few units of the USO (United Services Organization) were integrated—often because whites wanted to dance to celebrated black musicians—but most social functions were separated by race. Some of the wartime "all-girl" bands were made up of black women who performed in USO shows, and volunteer black women helped run the 300 USO clubs for blacks. By far the majority of these catered to black men, however, as black female soldiers were a minority within a minority. Because many black male units were commanded by white male officers, the dating scene for black female officers was particularly bleak. Theaters, restaurants, buses, and so forth remained segregated in most towns near military camps, and even though they were rendering stellar service to their country, these women often justifiably felt isolated and unwanted.

No group of women, black or white, endured more hostility than military wives who tried to accompany their husbands to training camps within the United States. Almost all military and moral authorities discouraged such migration, but millions of women nonetheless attempted it. For African-American army wives, the most probable destination was Fort Huachuca, Arizona, where more black male soldiers trained than anywhere else. As in other posts, men vastly outnumbered women, but Fort Huachuca was more racially diverse than most places. According to Thelma Thurston Gorham, Fort Huachuca's 14,000 men lived among some 300 women, "excluding WAACS. They include nurses, hospital technicians, civilian employees and wives of officers, enlisted

men and civilian workers—Negro, white, Mexican, Indian, and Filipino." Diversity did not mean equality, however, and African-American military wives there lived in "an unpainted plywood shack that rivals the best that some slum dwellings have to offer."

Discrimination, however, was something that they had dealt with all of their lives, and especially for women who actually joined the military (as opposed to military wives), their time in the armed forces was a better experience than most ever had. At the end of the war, for example, Private First Class Thelma Giddings, a black woman, told a *New York Times Magazine* reporter that she never again intended to work as a maid. "They're going to have to kick me out of this Army," she declared. "The WAC was made to order for me." When the military downsized at the war's end, however, most female soldiers of either race had little choice except to return to civilian life.

But there also the war wrought change, and millions of black women joined Giddings' determination never again to work in the household service that had so limited their prewar horizons. At least a half-million domestic servants left that field during the war years, as the black woman in the kitchen, a standard feature of affluent homes throughout American history, began to disappear. Instead, these women found industrial jobs never before open to them. Some astonished their employers: reporter Kathryn Blood, for example, featured two African-American women who set a record for riveting speed at Lockheed, even though they had just one year of experience.

Because of the tremendous need to build equipment to win the war, the government for the first time began to pressure industry to hire women and minorities. Congress still was too conservative to pass anti-discrimination legislation, but President Franklin Roosevelt had issued Executive Order 8802 already in June of 1941, six months prior to U.S. entrance in the war. It banned race (but not gender) discrimination in civil service jobs, and a May 1943 executive order extended the ban to defense industries with federal contracts. Some rioting greeted this order, but Roosevelt did not back down. He also appointed a Fair Employment Practices Committee to which workers could take their cases. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, of course, already was widely known for her efforts on behalf of black people.

Mary Anderson, who headed the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor, encouraged black women to apply for new defense jobs, as did Mary McLeod Bethune. She headed the National Youth Administration, which led federal agencies in encouraging black youth to learn relevant job skills. It ran training programs all over the country that offered minority applicants, including young African-American women, the chance to apply for defense jobs with certification of their knowledge in hand.

Unlike earlier eras, aptitude tests were well developed by World War II, and this allowed minorities an opportunity to disprove accepted myths about innate ability. In one notable example, a black woman made the highest grade among 6,000



An African-American nurse treats a German POW. Racism was so thoroughly accepted in Nazi Germany that prisoners of war were confounded by the competence of black nurses. *Courtesy of National Archives*



people who took the Civil Service examination for naval yard applicants. Shipyards, however, remained the most conservative about hiring new kinds of workers; aircraft manufacture offered somewhat more opportunity; and the munitions industry was the most likely to hire black women.

Racism may have been a factor in this because the munitions industry was the most dangerous civilian work—but its extra hazard pay meant that many black women wanted these jobs, and the industry was one of very few that had a waiting list of applicants. La Verne Bradley wrote in *National Geographic* of finding women

in steel-barricaded rooms measuring and loading pom-pom mix, lead azide, TNT, tetryl, and fulminate of mercury. Most of them were colored. They seemed delightfully blasé as they passed the stuff along,... but they treat the powder with respect. They know that any snip of it could blow them to flinders.

Such defense plants indeed had several fatal explosions during the war. In one of them, at the Chemical Warfare Arsenal in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, a black woman, Anne Marie Young, earned the highest civilian award given by the War Department for her courage. Other catastrophes occurred at Elkton, Maryland—where blacks also encountered significant discrimination in housing.

Another common industry that black women entered because of the war was the garment industry. It had been largely unionized since strikes back at the turn of the century, but most employees were white women, especially immigrants. As these people acclimated to America during the 1930s and then found better opportunities in the 1940s, the industry finally reached out to black women. This was especially likely for companies that manufactured uniforms, tents, and other sewing needs for the military. Their federal contracts meant that they could not openly discriminate, and especially in the great garment districts of New York and Chicago, African-

American women obtained unionized jobs. Their numbers rose 350 percent during the war.

Others worked in the industry basic to all others—steel. In the mills of Gary, Indiana, famed Margaret Bourke-White photographed them doing hot, heavy, dangerous tasks. Pittsburgh's Oliver Iron and Steel Corporation redrafted its personnel policies to include black women, and the same was true for the city's Union Switch and Signal Company. Several railroads turned to them for such unpleasant chores as washing train cars in freezing weather—while black women continued to be excluded from the indoor, unionized jobs that black men traditionally held as train conductors and porters.

Northern industrial cities, in fact, appeared to be almost as reluctant as those in the segregated South about hiring black women for more pleasant, indoor office work. Writer George DeMar complained, for example:

The Public Utilities of Pittsburgh ... have not hired Negro women ... Though ... 20,000 Negro women are potential industrial workers, in Pittsburgh there is not a single Negro clerk, stenographer, telephone operator, receptionist, meter reader, or even elevator operator.

The city's Westinghouse corporation hired some 3,500 women to do such traditionally male work such as running drill presses and milling machines—but the approximately 100 black women were segregated on the night shift. In fact, many black workers throughout the nation and across the range of industries told investigators that they believed they were especially likely to be assigned to night shifts.

That complicated the already difficult issue of child care. A problem for almost all working mothers, child care was much more difficult for black women to obtain. In Childersburg, Alabama, for example, where the government opened a child care facility for working mothers in the munitions industry, local bans on racial integration meant that the nursery did not admit black children.

Two serious race riots occurred during the war, both of them outside of the segregated South and both in June of 1943. The Los Angeles one was a combined attack on Hispanics and blacks, but the more serious one—serious enough that President Roosevelt diverted soldiers to stop it—was in Detroit. White factory workers there reacted violently to Roosevelt's May 27 order that all defense plant contracts include clauses prohibiting racial discrimination. Black factory workers got pay raises as a result, and some jealous whites protested by destroying property.

Factory work generally paid better than clerical work, but many black women emulated white ones in trading pay for better working conditions—and especially for the relative security of a government job. Washington, D.C., had been a mecca for blacks since the Civil War, and evidence of the transforming nature of the war years may be mostly clearly shown there: fewer than 60,000 black women held federal jobs in 1940; by April 1944, about 200,000 were employed by their nation.

They felt at least some protection from job discrimination because of Roosevelt's Executive Order, and Washington led the way in civil rights milestones. Although in her eighties, Mary Church Terrell, who had founded the National Association of Colored Women in 1896, promoted desegregation during the war. She supported young Howard University students who insisted on service at Thompson's Restaurant and ultimately won a lawsuit in 1953. The war years of the 1940s provided many such training-ground cases for the civil rights movement of the 1950s.

The war also meant that millions of black families left the sharecropping lifestyle of the South for the industrial North. This transplantation of people from the farms and small towns of impoverished Alabama and Mississippi to the industrial heartlands of Detroit and Buffalo marked the biggest change of all. Even without intending to make attitudinal change, basic philosophies of life began to shift in the new surroundings. Especially in those defense industries where enlightened personnel managers introduced creative ideas, black women responded like white women and sought new horizons for themselves. Writer Ida Coker Clark, who observed activities in a Philadelphia social club for defense workers, trenchantly said:

On the nights that both Negro and white men and women attended the USO-YWCA midnight skating parties ..., contacts were made ... These men and women were employed at the Signal Corps Depot, Frankford Arsenal, Bendix Corporation, Navy Yard, Midvale Steel Corporation, Quartermaster Depot, Pennsylvania Railroad, and Sun Shipbuilding Company. Whether white or Negro, the "shop talk" was different according to whether the worker was an old worker or a new defense one.

This was to be expected, but over [time] ... many of the Negro women ... talk[ed] of their part in bond rallies, their appearance with the glee club on lunch hour programs, in their contributions to plant bulletins ... Such "on the job" participation by Negro women may seem trivial, but there are implication for the future in the way that our women become represented.

The word "racism" was coined in a prewar book by anthropologist Ruth Benedict as a result of rising fascism in Europe: she used it to describe the Nazi philosophy that all non-Aryans were inferior, a belief that Hitler used to exterminate Jews. In a book on the Japanese at the war's end, she promoted the concept of cultural relativism, arguing that different societies have different values and that peace would come only when people showed greater respect for differences. Those ideas were fundamental to ending thoughtless stereotypes and vicious behavior towards minorities, and in helping to exterminate fascism based on racism, African-American women took a huge leap forward.

**See also:** Adams, Charity; Army Nurse Corps; Bandel, Betty; Bethune, Mary McLeod; British women; child care; Davis, Emily Claire; Des Moines, Fort; domestic servants; European Theater of Operations; housing; Marines; munitions; nurses; music; National Youth Administration; Navy Nurse Corps; SPARs; underutilization; USO; WAVES; Women's Army Auxiliary Corps; YWCA

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## AIRCRAFT WORKERS

Perhaps no industrial work so captured the era's imagination as did the women who joined the labor force in the nation's still-new aircraft factories. These and other "production soldiers" were absolutely vital to victory, for

more than any war in the past, World War II was a battle of production.

Many aircraft factories had been built for some other purpose, but after Pearl Harbor, the nation stopped making cars, refrigerators, and countless other items. Few manufacturers objected, and instead corporations signed profit-controlled contracts with the government for war materiel. America was to become "the arsenal of democracy," as thousands of factories re-tooled to make a product needed by the War Department.

When President Franklin D. Roosevelt asked in 1940 for 50,000 new planes in the next year, his political opponents saw this impossible goal as clear evidence that he was insane—but by 1944, the United States was producing 120,000 planes annually. Congress appropriated an astonishing \$71.5 billion for defense in 1943, with more than a third of that going to the Army Air Corps for almost 100,000 additional planes in that fiscal year. Many replaced planes that had been built, delivered, and destroyed within months of their manufacture. Although the War Department understandably did not publicize American losses, the scale of destruction can be seen in the June 1943 announcement that 4,198 enemy planes had been shot down over Britain alone.

It was women who made the difference in this manufacturing marathon: while fascist Germany and Japan clung to their conservative ideas on women's proper place, American women were strongly encouraged to take these new jobs. Most had never seen the interior of a plane before; they did not know a fuselage from landing gear, but they left their kitchens, learned new skills quickly, and ultimately were wonderfully successful. The majority of planes that they built fell into two categories: large bombers and small fighters. Today's troop transport planes, cargo planes, and tankers did not yet exist: soldiers sailed overseas on crowded ships, with fuel and cargo filling the hulls of those ships.

"Rosie the Riveter" soon became closely associated with aircraft manufacture because riveting was the most common thing that women did—and riveting, in fact, turned out to be highly analogous to sewing. Women rapidly learned the work of assembling an airplane, riveting its steel seams together, just as most women of this era knew how to assemble and seam together a garment from fabric they had cut.

Rosie did more than rivet, however, for aircraft manufacture included jobs from the very heavy to the extremely fragile. Women ran huge hydraulic presses that cut metal parts, much in the way that they used scissors and pinkie shears at home. They ran cranes that moved hulking plane parts from one section of a factory to another: in one plant, for example, a 15-ton crane was operated by a teenager just out of high school. Still other women did such delicate work as painting radium on tiny measurements so that pilots could see a plane's vital instrument panel in the dark.

At Douglas Aircraft, which later became McDonald/Douglas, women soon made up 45 percent of the labor force; at Boeing, according to Don Wharton, who wrote just six months after U.S. entry into the war, it was possible for a



fuselage to move down a conveyer belt, “and nowhere enroute does a man touch it.” Two years after Pearl Harbor, there were some 475,000 women working in aircraft factories—which, by comparison, was almost five times as many as ever joined the Women’s Army Corps.

Most factories were on the coasts, where it was easiest for the planes to take off for the European and Pacific Theaters of Operations, but a few were in the Midwest, especially the St. Louis and Kansas City areas. Flat land, relatively mild climate, and an abundant supply of female labor in a previously agricultural economy attracted aircraft manufacturers, including Boeing, Cessna, and Lear. Olive Ann Beech was one of these aircraft executives. A pioneer female test pilot, she and her husband, Walter Beech, had founded Beech Aircraft in 1932; they eventually employed some 10,000 people in the Wichita area. The company, sometimes called Beechcraft, lasted long after the war and was finally absorbed by Raytheon in 1980.

Although most plane factories were on the coasts, mid-western women also built tens of thousands of planes. Soon after Japan attacked Hawaii’s Pearl Harbor, for instance, the Kansas City plant of Trans World Airlines (TWA) hired 110 women as trainees to replace men who were drafted. Most newcomers did such seemingly “women’s work” as sewing aircraft upholstery—but the very first woman hired was an artist who set the model for painting radium. Soon other women were assembling tiny gauges that had to be perfect: lives literally depended on their accuracy. It had not occurred to management previously that women’s smaller fingers and experience with intricate skills such as needlework could be advantageous to factory production and airline maintenance. In December 1942, however, a TWA foreman enthused to *Aviation*, “these jobs are just *made* for women!”

Some aircraft factories were so large that they resembled small towns, complete with directional signs for parts of the plant that could be a mile away. Many women were thrilled by the bigness of the scene, so different from isolated housework. One worker, A. Louise Fillebrown, wrote that after many months:

I still love to come in under the huge dome, to blink at all the thousands of light ... It isn’t a bleak place. Rather it sparkles with shining steel surfaces, it sings a busy song of industry and action: and for some unknown reason the gods of harmony decided that nile green and blue made swell priming coats [of paint] for airplanes.

Still, she acknowledged that the initial adjustment had been difficult, saying that by noon of her first day, “my head ached with the vibration and noise.” Elizabeth Meyer, another worker, was surprised that despite her athletic ability, the work was hard: her hands were swollen for the first three weeks, and she said, “I had to hurry to keep up with the [assembly] line. I got clamps on backward; I felt all thumbs. And the other girls razzed me.”

Virtually every account of aircraft factories said that women initially were upset by the tremendous noise level,



An A-20 bomber being riveted by a woman worker at Douglas Aircraft Company plant at Long Beach, California. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

and even after long and successful experience on the job, there were days when the din overwhelmed some. One woman described working in the tight confines of a plane’s nose to *Science News Letter*: “Two riveters would be screaming through the skin of the plane to give each other instructions. Their gun would go off, screeching hollowly into my eardrums. There would be two men hammering on the outside just over my head...”

Rumors circulated that the vibrations of riveting caused breast cancer, and the term “riveters’ ovaries” soon developed for any gynecological problem. Back aches and muscle strains were predictable, the pain intensified by women’s fear of failure and the knowledge that any mistake they made could cost the lives of pilots and crews. Pressure was induced, too, by women’s awareness that many men did not want them to prove capable of doing the work.

If blue-collar men were slow to reconcile themselves to the presence of women, white-collar managers soon were happy to praise them. Glenn Martin, a co-founder of Martin-Marietta, enthused to reporter La Verne Bradley: “We have women helping design our planes in the Engineering Department, building them on the production line, [and] operating almost every conceivable type of machinery, from rivet guns to giant stamp presses.” They even had an “all-girl” crew that tested the finished planes, including bombers, who then made any necessary adjustments before the plane headed out to war. During such tests, one woman operated the controls in the plane’s cabin, while another checked the release mechanisms in its rear; they used an intercom to yell “bombs away!”

Managers discovered women were more adept than men at some tasks, with Boeing almost doubling its output of B-17s during the first year that nearly half of its male employees were replaced by “completely inexperienced women.” They attributed this to several unexpected factors, including the greater dexterity of female fingers, women’s willingness to learn new techniques and to admit their mistakes, and especially a greater willingness to stick to tedious tasks.



Especially in the Los Angeles area, aircraft manufacturing provided new job opportunities. *Courtesy of National Archives*

Most of all, male supervisors acknowledged that women were insistent on quality: many were akin to the California Consolidated Aircraft foreman who told *Saturday Evening Post*, “Nothing gets by them unless it’s right.”

Executives also credited women with greater frugality than men: at an all-woman machine shop in Coronado, California, for example, a manager told reporter Mary Kelly that “rivets, swept up by the thousands from assembly line floors, are salvaged, separated into various sizes, and sent back to San Diego,” where the “mother factory” was. “Feeder factory” was the term for smaller, pre-assembly places, and the eleven created by Convair Aircraft around its San Diego plant employed 90 percent women.

Standing on the wing of a plane to rivet, of course, could not be done in a dress, and more than any other industry, it was aircraft manufacture that made it respectable for women to wear slacks in public. Many women tied their hair in turbans to keep it away from dangerous machinery, and that, too, became a fashion of the forties. New aircraft executives usually were more progressive than most older manufacturers, and among the things routinely offered were locker rooms that enabled women to change from work clothes to street clothes.

Because the need was so urgent and because it was expensive to shut down machines and then heat them up again, most factories operated twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Most workers had just one day off per week, with routine work weeks of fifty or more hours; unmarried women with no home obligations worked as many as seventy hours a

week. To make this possible, some plants assisted with child care, while others offered nutritious cafeteria meals and even take-home meals. In an era before fast food—or microwaves or even freezers—such innovations were important to preventing absenteeism and to maintaining morale.

The newness of the aircraft industry also meant that it was more likely than others to adhere to Rooseveltian goals for equal pay. Although most men still earned more than most women, the usual rate for the jobs women did was between 60 and 90 cents per hour, compared with prewar jobs that averaged 45 cents. Sundays could pay \$14—or more than a third of the expected weekly wage. Such money was a big motivation to skip church; its appeal could change a woman’s life in many ways.

These paychecks seemed a fortune to women accustomed to Great Depression conditions, when they seldom expected to work outside of the home at all, let alone have an opportunity for a well-paid job. Indeed, the industry’s pay was so good that it was not uncommon for teachers, nurses, and others who were well-educated but poorly paid to leave those professions for riveting.

In addition to building planes, women worked in maintaining them. Western Airlines began by training a few women to do the same jobs their husbands did—cleaning spark plugs and making minor repairs. In Kansas City, TWA experimented with 110 women; their program soon was emulated by airlines coast to coast. While some women did mundane work in the upholstery and cleaning departments, others repaired intricate instruments in which a tiny misalignment could mean death.

The women themselves were so excited about their new careers that many joined WAMS, or Women in Airline Maintenance. The corporate invention of Transcontinental, Western, and other airlines, WAMS encouraged women to grow into more difficult work, including repair jobs on carburetors, pistons, valves, and even complete engine overhaul. Most repair work, however, did not come back to civilian women in factories, but instead was done by Air WACs and other military women on air bases.

It is not terribly surprising that the aircraft industry was more welcoming to women than most other industries: because it was a new industry, it did not cherish the prejudices of other, older manufacturers; because it valued lightness and grace over massive ponderousness, it seemed a natural for women to replace men who had to go to war. Perhaps the most interesting example of this new approach was at Strato Equipment, a small Minneapolis company that partnered with the University of Minnesota and the Mayo Clinic to research and design high-altitude pressure suits for pilots. One hundred percent of the workers at Strato were female; the only male involved was a test dummy.

*See also:* **absenteeism; Air WACs; child care; dress; European Theater of Operations; Pacific Theater of Operations; Pearl Harbor; males, comparisons with; nurses; pay; “Rosie the Riveter”; teachers**

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## AIR WACS

Although "Air WAC" was a commonly used term in this era, it was more nearly an invention of the public than an official military usage. It referred to members of the Women's Army Corps (WAC) who worked with the Army Air Force (AAF).

Today's Air Force did not yet exist as an independent service; instead, the U.S. Army and the U.S. Navy had air-related branches, and both had women assigned to them. Such

women in the Army soon were dubbed "Air WACs," but an analogous term did not develop for Navy women whose work was aircraft connected; they continued to be simply WAVES, the term for all non-nursing women in the Navy.

Being an Air WAC was considered the height of trendiness. Because many women quite accurately feared that joining the WAC would mean endless KP (kitchen police), recruiters soon encouraged the creation of a new image—and reality—to counteract that deterrent to enlistment. The AAF, as a new unit, was progressive about new ideas, and eager to utilize the skills of more women, it sought and received permission from the army to operate its own separate and permanent recruitment program. There were plenty of options available to offer recruits, as by 1943, the AAF had created some 900 air bases throughout the world.

Colonel Betty Bandel, the top WAC officer assigned to the AAF, established a plan that, in her own words, "enabled the Air Forces to appeal to women directly, promising them job assignments of their choice and assuring them that every effort would be made to assign them to a station of their choice." The results showed that women knew what they wanted and that they took their careers far more seriously than the recruitment officers and their associated advertising executives had ever suspected.

Bandel's promise of "a station of their choice" also revealed that women wanted to travel. When the Air Transport Command, for example, "held out the prospect of eventual assignment to one of its far-flung bases around the world," the ATC's female enlistment jumped from 500 to 5,500 in less than a year. WAC historian Mattie Treadwell reported that during the period from October of 1943 through December of 1944, the 27,047 women who joined Bandel's Air WAC program was more than that of all other WAC recruitment efforts added together.

A July 27, 1944, Oklahoma recruitment drive, however, was a literal disaster. Private Marjory Linheart Babinetz was doing a radio broadcast, describing combat flying over Stillwater, when the plane crashed and killed her. Her Pennsylvania family was the first to receive an Air Medal because of the death of a WAC.

Most Air WACs, though, not only did not fly, but seldom even saw the inside of a plane. They were simply WACs assigned to the AAF, and they usually worked with typewriters, not turbines. According to University of Chicago historians writing in 1958, the AAF's reasoning was that "since men with these [mechanical] skills usually could be found, and since the need for women's clerical skills continued unabated, no significant attempt was made to train women" in flight mechanics.

Even so, there soon were over 600 women in AAF Airplane Mechanics and another 650 who were classified as Aviation Specialists. Women largely took over the rigging and maintenance of parachutes, something on which men's lives very literally depended. Other Air WACs worked on planes as welders, woodworkers, etc. Occasionally, they went on flights as radio operators, but this was rare. As writer Barbara Selby



concluded, “for every woman flying on an army plane, there are about 750 doing a ground job in aviation.”

Many served in the South, especially Florida, as the peninsula’s flat land and predictable weather provided an ideal locale for aviation training. The result was 172 military facilities, ranging from Pensacola to Key West. Some cities had multiple air major fields. Tampa, for instance, had three: so many male aviation students trained there—and so many accidentally dived into the warm coastal waters—that the local slogan was “a plane a day in Tampa Bay.” Air WACs were billeted at MacDill Field and helped publish its magazine, *The Thunderbird*.

As they proved themselves capable, some Air WACs achieved their goal of going overseas before the end of the war. Again, they usually worked behind a desk instead of under an engine, but some ended up assigned to such exotic places as India—where they lived very pleasantly with native workers, often male, doing all menial tasks for them.

Ultimately, though, just as there was a limit to the number of men who would voluntarily join the armed forces, so it was with women; and because Congress decided not to draft women, the military had no choice but to supplement Air WACs with civilians. By June 1943, the AAF alone employed over 150,000 civilian women: like Air WACs, they repaired fur-lined flying suits, repainted radium dials, riveted and welded replacement parts, replaced spark plugs, painted camouflage on planes, refueled tanks, and more. The chief difference was that these civilians were free at the end of their day and were free to quit their jobs, while the Air WAC had made a commitment to her country to go where she was needed and to do what had to be done.

**See also: advertising; Bandel, Betty; decorations; European Theater of Operations; fatalities; kitchen police; recruitment; underutilization; WAVES; Women’s Army Corps**

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## ALASKAN WOMEN

Although neither was yet a state, women in the Hawaii Territory and in the Alaska Territory felt the effects of World War II much more directly than those anywhere in the United States. Alaska did not endure the stunning devastation that Hawaii did with the attack on Pearl Harbor, but because parts of Alaska are much closer to Japan than Hawaii is, Alaskans had every reason to expect a similar attack throughout the four years of the war.

Indeed, on June 2, 1942, six months after the Japanese wiped out Hawaii’s Pearl Harbor, their planes bombed Dutch Harbor on the Aleutian island of Unalaska. Although they did not succeed in occupying that island, they soon took over Attu and Kiska, islands that are far out in the Bering Sea at the end of the Aleutian chain. Like the December 7th attack on Pearl Harbor, the warfare at Attu began also began on a Sunday morning. “We were having church services in Attu,” one Aleut told writer Ethel Oliver, “when the gunboats ... started machine-gun fire on the village.”

They came on shore, firing into homes, but their primary objective seemed to be capturing the two non-native people there, teacher Etta Jones and her husband, who was the first fatality. Whether he killed himself or was killed by the Japanese has been long debated, but Etta Jones was taken with some forty Attuans to Japan, where she lived in a prisoner-of-war camp until the 1945 end of the war. One native woman, Anecia Prokopioff, died on their September journey and was buried at sea. The Attuans were separated from Jones, and twenty-two of them died during more than three years of imprisonment.

Kiska fell on June 3, and according to historian Dean Kohlhoff, “the Japanese considered these newly acquired Aleutian Islands to be permanent additions to Greater Japan. Their maps included them in the Empire.” U.S. naval forces attempted to retake Kiska on June 10, but were repelled, and then the question became what to do about other islands that might come under attack.

The decision was quick and without input from civilians. Atka, an island between Unalaska and Attu, was the first to be evacuated: residents were forcibly displaced, while the U.S. Navy razed the village, burning all property to the ground to avoid the possibility that it could prove valuable to the Japanese. Its eighty-three residents were sent temporarily to another island, Nikolski, but that too was scheduled for evacuation.

As at Attu, it was the community teacher, Indian Service employee Pauline Whitfield, who assumed leadership. "Food supply almost exhausted," she telegraphed to officials at Dutch Harbor, requesting "either evacuation...or food."

As other islands were evacuated, Margaret Quinn, head nurse for the Indian Service, similarly pressured Aleutian authorities. With only a three-day supply of food and in an area "subject to air raids," she was adamant:

Due to four hundred natives arriving here from Atka and Pribilofs a difficult situation arises ... Request you advise immediate steps being taken to remove all natives [from] this area or to adequately take care of them. It is absolutely essential that a decision be made immediately. If you are not able to make this decision, will wire Washington. Request rush reply.

Evacuation soon became the policy, but that involved many hardships. Again, teachers were the leaders: Ruby McGee and her husband Charles accompanied the Atkans to Killisnoo, where a dilapidated herring saltery became home to nineteen families. The McGees tried to make repairs to this unsafe housing, but the Atkans suffered highest mortality rate of any of the many Aleuts who would be evacuated. Eighteen percent of Atkans died, while Ruby McGee wrote vainly to authorities about the problems in the camp.

Both the Japanese and the American military completely disrupted life, as nearly 900 Aleuts would be forcibly evacuated. The U.S. military sent most to spend the rest of the war hundreds of miles away in southeastern Alaska. Permitted to take just a few clothes, they watched from crowded ships as American soldiers burned their property to prevent any use by the Japanese—and they thus knew in advance of the war's end that there would not be a home to come home to.

Back "in the States," the fact that U.S. territory was held by Japan shocked Americans. To quell the public outcry, the military diverted resources that some strategists argue would have been better directed to other fronts—and brought active warfare to Alaskans. American forces began bombarding Kiska in August 1942, and by the following summer, two air bases had been built on the Aleutians. Ultimately, some 100,000 soldiers would be stationed in the Alaska Territory.

Russia was an American ally in World War II, and because Russia had owned Alaska prior to U.S. purchase in 1867, there were historical links between the two. The first Russian military mission arrived soon after the 1942 Japanese invasion, and it included female pilots and female interpreters. Russian women also were assigned to ships, and in a 1943 case, American medical staff helped deliver a baby on a Russian ship at Dutch Harbor—whose mother returned to her job of shoveling coal for the ship's engines the next day.

The Army Nurse Corps (ANC), the oldest of American military units for women, also arrived at Dutch Harbor in 1942. The ANC took up all the available housing, so when the Navy Nurse Corps (NNC) arrived, many of them were fortunate enough to live in newly-built housing that featured unexpected luxurious bathrooms. ANC members would cross the bay to the NNC area to enjoy a warm bath, but the



Note the ID number on this Aleutian forced to leave her home. *Courtesy of Aleutian Pribilof Islands Association, Inc.*

Aleutians remained sufficiently open to attack that nurses did not work the late-night shift except in emergencies. They also were under orders never to walk alone—partly because the Japanese occasionally launched balloons that exploded with shrapnel upon landing.

The first of the Women's Army Corps (WACs) landed on Kodiak Island early in 1943, when the WAC itself was less than one year old. By the 1945 end of the war, the Navy's WAVES also were assigned to Alaska. The Army Corps of Engineers additionally employed a number of civilian American women who shared the harsh inland living conditions during the construction of the Alaska-Canadian Highway. Begun in 1942 for wartime transportation, it was the first paved road in Canada's Yukon Territory and America's Alaska Territory. Work in this wilderness had to be done quickly during the long, mosquito-filled days of summer, for winter brought both darkness and super-frozen soil. Occasional women came to Alaska as USO entertainers, but the ratio of women to men remained so low, especially on the Aleutian Islands, that many soldiers rarely saw a woman. Soldiers made a joke of this, telling others that "there was a woman behind every tree" on the windy, treeless islands of the far Aleutians. The women there, of course, enjoyed an endless parade of dateable men, but some lost their lives to male displays of bravado, as several nurses died in plane crashes because of pilots who flew recklessly.

In May 1943, Americans mounted an assault on Japanese forces on Attu, and some 35,000 American and Canadian

troops made the final invasion in mid-August. Both they and the Japanese suffered appreciable casualties, but when the Allies took the last garrison, they discovered that the few thousand remaining Japanese had evacuated by submarine and unseen ships.

The war years were worst for Alaskans of Asian descent, who were seen as likely terrorists by many Americans. Again, the U.S. military rounded them up and interned them as enemy aliens on the Pribilof Islands, hundreds of miles away from the Japanese threat. Almost five hundred internees were forced to live in abandoned mining and fishing camps there; some occupied a former fish cannery, with families in 8 × 10 cubicles separated from each other only by hanging blankets. The water was contaminated; there was no medical attention; and approximately 10 percent died.

Having an Anglo name mattered greatly—even if a woman was herself entirely Asian by heritage. Alice Mikami, for example, had married Roland Snodgrass in 1939 and was not interned—but her parents were. Most natives never were compensated either for the time they spent imprisoned or for their destroyed property.

Anfesia Shapsnikoff, an Aleut of Russian descent who was known for her skill as a basket maker, courageously hid priceless art from potential Japanese thief. She took many artifacts from Russian Orthodox churches and stored them in caves until the threat of invasion was over. War also meant an increase in feminist attitudes that was sufficient enough for Alaskans to elect their first woman in the territorial legislature: Nell Scott, a Democrat from Seldovia, was elected in 1942.

Alaskan women also had a fine role model in Dr. Ruth Gruber, an expert on the area who flew between Alaska and Washington, DC as the personal representative of Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes, the top authority for territories. Gruber's report to Ickes on Unalaska early in the war presented a sordid situation: the arrival of thousands of soldiers, she said, meant that "money flowed and liquor overflowed," with girls being "prostituted at 12 and 15" years old.

Some of the men stationed in Alaska married native women and stayed there when the war ended, and a few female soldiers homesteaded on Alaskan land. Statehood, finally achieved in 1959, was a direct result of World War II.

**See also:** **Army Nurse Corps; Hawaiian women; Japanese-American women; Navy Nurse Corps; Pearl Harbor; Russian women; USO; WAVES; Women's Army Corps**

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## ALL-AMERICAN GIRLS PROFESSIONAL BASEBALL LEAGUE

The unique circumstances of World War II, with millions of men sidelined by the war, meant that women had opportunities to do things that the public did not encourage them to do either before or after the war. The All-American Girls Professional Baseball League was one such activity.

It was the brainchild of chewing-gum magnate Phillip Wrigley, who owned the Chicago Cubs and its Wrigley Field. Because almost half of male major leaguers were in the military by the end of 1942, Wrigley promoted the creation of four teams of young women from mid-size cities nearby: Kenosha and Racine, Wisconsin; Rockford, Illinois; and South Bend, Indiana. They drew almost 180,000 fans to their first season, the summer of 1943, when they played a tough schedule of 180 games.

Female eagerness to exercise athletic ability is clear from the fact that more than 250 showed up for the first tryouts in Chicago. Many of them had first played on volunteer teams for the defense plants in which they worked—often because they were not yet old enough to join the league. Those hired not only got a great chance to play and to travel, their pay also was quite good, with \$75 as an average salary in 1944—about twice, for example, what a woman working in an aircraft factory could expect to earn. Minimal weekly wages were \$55 plus expenses, and stars could get much more. An early leaguer, Sophie Kurys of Flint, Michigan, made as much as \$375 a week, plus an annual \$1,000 signing bonus.

That was more money than many male minor league players made, but the women's salaries were justified: they played good ball and drew audiences that often were larger than the comparable men's teams. The league soon expanded to ten teams, mostly in the Midwest and Upper South, including such cities as Knoxville, Tennessee and Minneapolis, Minnesota. Unlike the male major leagues, the women eventually expanded to include teams in Puerto Rico and Cuba.

Managers were male, often longtime professional baseball coaches who generally were surprised at the level of skill that these young women possessed. In addition to their professional games, "The Girls of Summer" also performed for soldiers at USO facilities and for patients in convalescent



hospitals. Most players were in their twenties; some were married; and almost all had loved ones in war zones.

Players were expected to be ladylike. They were required to complete the era's "charm school" classes in etiquette, posture, and other behavior, while chaperones in military-style uniforms accompanied them on their travels. They wore make-up on the field, and their playing uniforms featured short skirts and bare legs—something that often meant abrasions when sliding into bases. Wrigley paternalism even extended to a training manual that spelled out a ten-step agenda for after-game grooming.

With the end of tire and gasoline rationing, the women attracted even more spectators during the immediate postwar years. In 1948, one million people attended league games, with an astounding one hundred thousand attendees for a game in Puerto Rico that year. The league disbanded, however, after eleven seasons, closing in 1953 largely because of the negative influence of television. As more Americans had TVs in their homes, they preferred watching major league teams on the screen to going out and supporting the live games of female players.

The All-American Girls Professional Baseball League regained national attention with the 1992 movie hit, *A League of Their Own*.

**See also: adolescence; defense industries; hospitals; rationing; recreation; USO**

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## ALLOTMENTS

To understand the mind-set that created the military's invention of "allotments," it is important to remember that when the United States entered World War II in 1941, less than a century had passed since the world's first women's rights proclamation in 1848. For thousands of years prior to that, legal systems assumed that men were superior to women and that women were only slightly superior to children (and not at all to their adult male children). At the war's beginning, American women had been voting for a mere two decades; the same was true of our allies in Russia, while French women did not yet vote at all. In England, the vote initially was limited to female "householders" over age 30. (Age, too, was a factor in the era's prevailing paternalism: males could be forced to lay down their lives for their country at age 18, but they could not vote until they reached 21.)

The same paternalistic attitudes governed allotments, or the portion of their monthly pay that soldiers did not personally receive. Instead, a significant portion of an enlisted man's pay was "allotted" directly to his "dependents." This usually meant his wife and/or children, but it could be another person, usually female, who had depended on his income when he was a civilian. Even soldiers without dependents were strongly encouraged by their commanding officers to allot part of their pay to savings accounts or war-bond purchase programs.

The male pronoun usage above is deliberate, for none of the women's corps in any of the military services gave women the option of naming dependents. Partly, this may have been because of attitudes that found it inconceivable for women to *have* dependents, but it also was because WACs, WAVES, members of the nurse corps, and so forth were required to be older and better educated than male soldiers. Having earned those credentials made female soldiers demonstrably more responsible than the average young male soldier—most of whom had been drafted under the Selective Service system or had enlisted only to get ahead of the draft, in the hope of having some options on assignments.

While about a half-million women served in the military, more than ten million men did, many of whom were married and had financial commitments to wives and children. Allotments were created both to ease soldiers' concerns about their families and especially to avoid having large numbers of pregnant women and mothers of young child who no choice other than public aid, or, as it later was termed, "welfare." For most of these women, the regular allotment check was a strongly liberating experience: especially in rural areas, many never before in their lives had cashed a check made out to them.

The military made a firm distinction between officers and enlisted men in this regard. Officers, from lieutenant through general, were commanders deemed to be mature and prudent gentlemen; they were expected to take care of their families, and their wives did not receive automatic allotments. The mass of troops, however, signed allotment papers giving Uncle Sam an address for dependents, who then received their monthly check in the mail.

This not only prevented poverty back home, but also ensured a better fighting force: a soldier could not gamble away all of his pay or spend it at brothels and taverns. Because the military provided his food, clothing, housing, and even cigarettes, the soldier had little incentive to spend, which encouraged him to stay close to camp and away from potential trouble. Finally, the system avoided what otherwise would have been a massive problem for men trying to send money across unsafe oceans from countries where postal services were nonexistent.

Congress worked out the solutions to these potentially messy personal problems in the Serviceman's Dependents Allowance Act of 1942. Largely sponsored by Senator Wright Patman, a Democrat from Texas, the law spelled out its intention to "provide family allowances for the depen-

dents of enlisted [sic] in the Army, Navy, Marine Corps and Coast Guard.” Although the act used the word “allowance,” the public soon began calling the payments “allotments”—perhaps because the War Department publication that began implementing the act said:

While it is not rigidly compulsory by law, a married serviceman is expected to allot \$22 of his pay each month to his wife. The Government matches his allotment with a Class A allowance of \$28 to his wife ... If they have one child the monthly allowance is \$40, and an additional \$10 for each additional child ...

The law was implemented through the Office of Dependency Benefits within the War Department, and, of course, many women, both civilian and military, worked on the details of carrying out this massive monthly disbursement of money. In an era prior to computers, simply keeping track of addresses for the largely young and mobile recipients was in itself a massive job. Yet complaints were few, and most allotment checks arrived in the mail with commendable regularity. Those checks also often were larger than soldiers’ families had enjoyed before, especially in poor parts of the nation. Indeed, the entire system was a greater social safety net than the world ever had seen. Its many practicalities meant that most Americans saw it as a genuine government service, not a paternalistic imposition. When women did need help with allotments, the Red Cross and other agencies intervened for them without charge.

After the war, though, the allotment’s usefulness began to fade, and, by the Vietnam War, the concept was increasingly objectionable. More women joined the military and married other soldiers, resulting in confusion on who was entitled to what allotment; the draft ended in the mid-1970s, and recruiting officers found that volunteers refused to sign away their pay; and finally, wives of military men—who often earned more money than their husbands—began to resent being termed “dependent.” When allotments still were done, it was considered a convenience for the soldier, not a routine expectation of a paternalistic military.

*See also:* **Army Nurse Corps; Association of Army and Navy Wives; British women; cigarettes; divorce; draft; Navy Nurse Corps; Red Cross; Russian women; Women’s Army Corps; WAVES**

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## AMERICAN NURSES’ ASSOCIATION (ANA)

The American Nurses’ Association existed before and after the war, but its role during World War II merits special consideration. It began in 1896, one of several women’s organizations that grew out of networking at the World Congress of Representative Women, held in Chicago in 1892–93 as part of the 400th anniversary of the Columbus expedition to the New World. Speeches by innovative public health administrators Lavinia Dock, Lillian Wald, and others led to formation of the American Nurses’ Association (ANA).

Almost a half-century old when World War II began, the ANA was strong enough to play a major role in national debate over whether Selective Service boards should consider women to be eligible for the draft. There had been appreciable discussion of emulating Britain and drafting women for industrial jobs early in the war, but that issue, which was best typified by the Austin-Wadsworth Bill, had faded by the time that discussion of drafting nurses arose.

By 1945, the military was desperately short of skilled nurses. President Franklin D. Roosevelt used his State of the Union speech to call for amendment of the Selective Service Act to “provide for the induction of nurses into the armed forces.” That these nurses would be female was assumed, for men did not enroll in nursing schools in that era. More than one thousand members of the Army Nurse Corps (ANC) and the Navy Nurse Corps (NNC) were themselves hospitalized, in most cases because of exhaustion.

After internal debate, the American Nurses’ Association approved the proposed legislation “in principle”—but the ANA went on to urge that Congress also pass one of the earlier acts to draft women for industrial jobs, arguing that nursing professionals should not be singled out as the only women subject to the draft. Many congressmen, in fact, were reluctant to make it appear that nurses—who had done far more than most to bring victory—should be the only group of women subject to forced serve. At the same time, Congress also was reluctant to return to the multi-faceted debate on drafting women for other defense jobs. The problem solved itself through simple timing: the House passed the bill in March, but before the Senate completed its April work, several important victories were won in European Theater of Operations. With the war going better than expected, the need for Congress to authorize an unprecedented draft of women was less compelling.

The wartime ANA, of course, did much more than represent nurses on this legislation. Throughout the era, it led recruitment efforts; it created programs to retrain nurses who had not recently practiced; it set standards for new aspects of the profession, such as flight nurses. ANA leaders worked especially closely with Congresswoman Frances Bolton of Ohio, who sponsored legislation for both civilian and military nurses.

The major flaw in ANA wartime policy was that, like many other organizations of the era, it was reluctant to accept help from qualified African-American women. The ANA did not begin admitting black nurses to membership until 1948, three



years after the war was over, and even then, several of its state affiliates still barred them. Today, however, the Washington, DC headquarters of the ANA represents almost three million registered nurses through more than fifty constituent organizations. Its publication, the *American Journal of Nursing*, remains extremely influential.

*See also:* **African-American women; Army Nurse Corps; Austin-Wadsworth Bill; Bolton Bill; Cadet Nurse Corps; draft; European Theater of Operations; flight nurses; hospitals; Navy Nurse Corps; Nurses Selective Service Bill**

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## AMERICAN WOMEN'S VOLUNTARY SERVICES

The American Women's Voluntary Services, or AWVS, managed to be perhaps the most popular and the most controversial of any of the new organizations of volunteers that sprang up to address the emergency needs of World War II.

It began almost two years before the United States entered the war, in January of 1940, and its founders were wealthy women with close personal ties to Britain. Mary Steele Ross, who became AWVS director early in 1941, had been a Washington, DC official with the Depression-era Works Progress Administration, but most AWVS founders were non-working women. All were internationalists, keenly aware of the crisis in Britain, and they modeled the new group on that nation's Women's Voluntary Services. Because of this, isolationist Americans were suspicious of AWVS from the start. Its base in New York City added to the image of the organization as elitist and overly assertive.

Organizational details brought more debate. The intention of AWVS founders was to emulate British women in teaching American women to drive ambulances and deliver emergency aid when the bombing of U.S. cities began. What

early members saw as prudent preparation, however, was to many Americans merely empty-headed excitement, or worse, agitation to encourage U.S. intervention in the war. "The first women to appear on the street in the blue-gray uniform of the AWVS," editorialized the *New Yorker*, "were usually hailed either as warmongers or as British stooges."

Other media enjoyed mocking this female effort, with *Time* chortling about the "eight official uniforms" of the AWVS, especially the "ski-troop suit for workers in the far North." Despite hostility, however, the AWVS grew quickly. Whether or not they were attracted by the possibility of being around the socially prominent founders, women took the required fifty hours of civil defense training seriously.

Some authorities rewarded them with recognition. When New York City was threatened by what turned out to be a false air-raid alarm two days after Pearl Harbor, the *New Yorker* reported that city police "ordered the AWVS to send out its Civilian Protection unit to warn civilians off the streets." In return for their dedication, AWVS women again found themselves "jeered at as silly busybodies." That would not have been the case if bombs had fallen, but their problem was that these well-trained volunteers had little to do except wait for the war to start—and even after American involvement, to wait for an American bombing blitz comparable to Britain's. When this never happened, it became easy to mock the women's excessive zeal rather than to admire their prescience had things turned out differently.

On the other hand, it is clear that some AWVS chapters took an unfair advantage of their local power—often with the full cooperation of men—and especially in showy places such as Hollywood. Anne Bosanko Green, who was a member of the Women's Army Corps (WAC) assigned to a military hospital near Los Angeles, wrote in a 1945 letter to her family of the appearance of famed conductor Arturo Toscanini:

The hospital gang was transported in a convoy of snazzy-looking station wagons piloted by the AWVS, and accompanied by guess what? — four gaudily uniformed state police on motorcycles, and two MPs [military police] also on motorcycles, all with sirens going like mad ... We screamed along, brushing aside traffic, going around corners on two wheels, going through all stop lights, and looking as though we were rushing to the front with a special message from Eisenhower ... Carmen and I found ourselves seven rows from the front, surrounded by mink coats, tuxedos, orchids, [and] Chanel No. Five.

Although she blamed the excess on Hollywood culture, not the AWVS, it was nonetheless true that one of the fundamental causes of public derision of AWVS was the moneyed nature of its founders. Doubtless many people, especially men, not only were jealous of these privileged women but also felt threatened by their nontraditional activism. Aware of this hostility, AWVS went well beyond the bounds of most organizations in this era to make its membership inclusive—but that liberalism merely gave its conservative critics more ammunition. Nonetheless, AWVS can be credited with unusual outreach: it had several units in Harlem, some of



Members of the American Women's Voluntary Services, wearing a variety of their eight uniforms, pose for the *New York World-Telegram* in 1942. Courtesy of Library of Congress

which were Spanish-speaking, as well as a Chinese unit. Its New Orleans chapter included blacks, and it even established a chapter of Taos tribe women in New Mexico. Membership required only service time; there were no dues.

AWVS members also could truthfully argue that they were willing to get their hands dirty and that the real problem was men who refused to accept their help. In California's fruitful valleys, for example, where timely food harvest was vital:

it took the A.W.V.S. five months to persuade the farmers that women should be used. Now there are 1,000 women in five camps ... The A.W.V.S. provides a cook and stocks the commissary. Women pay \$1 a day board and get the regular migratory workers' wages. It's not an easy life; the thermometer may reach 105 in the day and descend to the depths at night. Warm water is rare; cold showers are the rule.

Other California AWVS women delivered "chuck wagons" of food to isolated Coast Guard stations for midnight meals; while in San Francisco, they taught Braille to seamen blinded in Pacific warfare. A Montana unit raised funds by making a cardboard image of Hitler and charging for the opportunity to shoot at him. Already by 1942, AWVS units in New York had sold more than \$5 million in war bonds, while in the suburbs of New York City, they took over round-the-clock ambulance services. Shirley Alexander, a reporter for popular *Collier's* magazine, wrote that such a woman was "doing a man's job ... strictly on her own," while writer Keith Ayling used strong language to criticize the AWVS critics:

I have seen millionaires' wives and working girls chatting and working together, colored folk, women of enemy alien descent, women in shabby clothes; and in working hours there is ... [no] distinction unless it is that the wealthy women are at pains to make the other people comfortable ... The word contemptible is too dignified to apply to people who commit this verbal sabotage at the expense of others who are shouldering the task of doing something for nothing.

Despite lampooning, AWVS continued to grow as women ignored critics they knew were ignorant and biased. The secret of this success should not have been a surprise to anyone who thought creatively about volunteerism: women, like men, wanted volunteer work that was different from their daily tasks; they wanted something new to learn, something unusual to do, and clear identification with a self-created group.

The most serious criticism of AWVS women was that they got more than their fair share of rationed gasoline, but because rationing board decision-making was locally based (and almost entirely controlled by men), the truth of this charge was difficult to ascertain. In any case, though, the same media that laughed at women's eagerness to volunteer in 1942 was charging them with laziness by 1944. Writing in the venerable *Saturday Evening Post*, J.C. Furnas typified other pundits by pointing out that attendance was poor at AWVS functions in Washington, DC and rhetorically asked, "Are Women Doing Their Share?"

Given the relentless negative response to their best efforts, it is not surprising that AWVS leaders allowed the organization to disband with the end of the war. That, too, is to their credit: they had formed for a specific cause, and when it was over, they did not misuse their success by holding on to a structure in search of a cause.

**See also:** African-American women; bonds; British women; Chinese-American women; civil defense; dress; food; hospitals; motor pools; Native American women; rationing; uniforms; volunteers; Women's Land Army

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### ANDERSON, ELDA EMMA (1899-1961)

One of a number of female physicists who worked on the atomic bomb, Elda Anderson was devoted to science and math all her life. She was born in Greenlake, Wisconsin, and earned a bachelor of science degree from that state's Ripon College in 1922. She went directly to the prestigious University of Wisconsin for a 1924 master's degree in physics and then taught throughout the Great Depression years of the 1930s. She rose to chair the physics department of Milwaukee-Dowder College, while also working on the doctorate that the University of Wisconsin awarded in 1941.

After the United States entered the war late that year, Anderson moved to New Jersey's Princeton University, where Albert Einstein and other famed scientists developed the physics that created the bomb. She was part of the team that moved nuclear physics from concept to reality, as she helped create the great atomic laboratory at Los Alamos, New Mexico. Dr. Anderson was there for the first test of this most horrific explosive the world has known.

When the bombs that were dropped on Japan in August 1945 put an end to the war, she briefly returned to Wisconsin and academia, but eager to continue her research, she moved in 1949 to the federal government's new Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee. She was its first chief of education for Health Physics and then expanded the safe use of radiation in medicine by creating a master's degree in Health Physics at Vanderbilt University. Also a founder of the American Board of Health Physics and other organizations, Anderson's peers elected her to top offices.

Like Edith Quimby, who pioneered nuclear medicine earlier in the century, Anderson lived a relatively long life despite frequent exposure to potentially dangerous materials. She continued to work after being diagnosed with leukemia in 1956 and died at Oak Ridge. Her most significant work is *Manual of Radiological Protection for Civil Defense* (1950).

**See also:** **Manhattan Project; scientific research and development**

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### ANDERSON, MARY (1872-1964)

As the head of the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor for the first quarter-century of its existence, Mary Anderson made a huge contribution to the welfare of working women, including those of the war years.

She was born in Sweden (which joined Ireland as the only nations from which women were more likely to emigrate than men) and came to the United States at age seventeen. Anderson worked as a domestic servant until 1892, when she joined thousands of immigrant women employed in Chicago's garment industry. By 1900, she was the unpaid head of her union local, and when a national strike occurred in 1911, the Women's Trade Union League hired her as a full-time labor leader. In 1917, when the United States entered World War I, she became assistant director of a new women's branch of the Army Ordnance Department.

The Women's Bureau was created at the war's end, and President Woodrow Wilson, a Democrat, appointed Anderson as its chief. Her abilities were so clear that she retained the position in the Republican administrations that followed in the 1920s. She continued with Democrat Franklin Roosevelt during the Great Depression years of the 1930s and on into the war years of the 1940s, always crusading for greater equity for women in the labor force. Anderson made a particular point of reaching out to African-American women, and Eleanor Roosevelt commended her by saying, "workers everywhere feel that Mary Anderson, the former factory worker, is still one of them."

It was, sadly, her disappointment with Labor Secretary Frances Perkins that led Anderson to resign in 1944, the last full year of the war. She had looked forward to having a woman as her boss, but had seen Perkins largely ignore the needs of women to cater instead to the traditional male heads of unions. When her bureau's workload was tremendously increased by the influx of millions of women into the wartime labor market without a corresponding increase in its budget, Anderson resigned. She was, after all, seventy-two years old and had given her whole life to the cause of working women.

Mary Anderson stayed in Washington, DC and published her autobiography just before her eightieth birthday; she lived to be honored on her ninetieth, in 1962, by President John F. Kennedy.

**See also:** **African-American women; labor force; Perkins, Frances; Roosevelt, Eleanor**



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## ARMY NURSE CORPS (ANC)

Women had done emergency nursing since the very first white settlements and their resulting conflicts with natives, but the nursing profession still was informal when, early in 1861, the War Department appointed mental health reformer Dorothea Dix as “Superintendent of United States Army Nurses” for the Civil War. In the decades that followed, the nursing profession began to set credentials and build schools, and by the time of the 1898 Spanish-American War, another group of nurses served under the aegis of Clara Barton and the American Red Cross. Although that war was brief, it was long enough to show military men that the army needed a permanent corps of credentialed nurses—and in that era, nurses were axiomatically women.

Congress thus created the Army Nurse Corps (ANC) in 1901, with Dita H. Dinney as the first commander; the Navy Nurse Corps would follow a few years later. Although the military rank given these women was not equivalent to that of men, both Army and Navy leadership wanted corps that were entirely under their command—as opposed to the quasi-military relationship with the Red Cross, a volunteer, civilian organization. Although the Red Cross would continue to work with soldiers during both world wars that followed, the War Department was much more comfortable with its own nurses, who could be commanded to go where they were needed.

By the time that the nation entered World War I, the ANC was equipped to render valuable service in field hospitals throughout western Europe. During the 1920s and 1930s, when the nation was at peace, ANC members enjoyed exceptional career opportunities. Although women—unlike men—had to pay for their own education before joining the army and had to remain unmarried, they were treated as officers and led comfortable, interesting lives, especially when contrasted with those of most women during the Great Depression. Army nurses were economically secure, able to travel, and usually had others to do their menial work.

That situation changed with World War II, as nurses were caught in the very first battles in the Pacific. Bombed by the Japanese at their Philippine hospital at Manila, they evacuated with the army to Bataan and then Corregidor, where they endured starvation. Those who did not escape ultimately joined some 3,500 civilians, many of them American women who were prisoners of war in Manila from early in 1942 to 1945.

The ANC had numbered a mere 700 in 1940, but by April

of 1941—long before Pearl Harbor—that many women joined the corps in a single month. Eventually, corps strength would rise to 60,000, but that would not be nearly enough. Even though nurses supervised large numbers of medical corpsmen who did the unskilled tasks, there was a serious shortage of skilled nurses throughout the war.

Many ANC members found themselves working themselves almost literally to death: in the war’s last months, more than one thousand military nurses had to be hospitalized because of exhaustion. Civilian nurses were scarce, too, and this shortage resulted in the unprecedented 1943 Bolton Bill, which introduced a number of programs to recruit nurses, as well as the 1945 Nurses Selective Service Act, which would have drafted women with nursing skills.

After the disaster in the Philippines, the army adopted more practical uniforms for nurses, replacing their starched white dresses with dark-green army fatigues suitable for the tent life that most would be living. A recruiting poster featured an intelligent-looking woman wearing a military uniform, not a nursing one, and the banner proclaimed, “YOU ARE NEEDED NOW. Join the ARMY NURSE CORPS.”

The army also increased standards for nurses’ physical training and made that applicable to individual assignments. Nurses bound for the next big front, North Africa, toughened up like men in desert training, including crawling through barbed wire with live ammunition exploding. At Arizona’s Camp Young, a nurse held the speed record for this dangerous and difficult test—doing the seventy-five yards in seven minutes. Training for the European Theater of Operations included such feats as walking with hands and feet on wires stretched over streams.

Women had to be capable of making a twenty-mile hike while wearing a helmet that weighed almost four pounds and carrying a thirty-pound pack on their backs, complete with a mess kit for their meals and a gas mask. They learned to pitch tents, chlorinate water, and camouflage themselves; they learned how to make a bed pan from newspaper and a stretcher from trousers. They breathed enough mustard gas and other lethal chemicals to learn to identify them. They went through a tear-gas chamber and put out incendiary bombs.

In the war’s first major offensive, when troops poured out of their ships and onto the beachheads of North Africa, over two hundred ANC women moved with them. At Oran and Arzew, they waded ashore, bullets and bombs exploding around them, and immediately set up their life-saving tent hospitals. Some ripped up their own underclothes to make bandages in the heat of the first emergency; they fed C-rations (emergency food) from their own packs to patients suffering from shock. Casualties streamed in, and for a week, nurses worked twenty-four-hour days, catching short naps fully dressed on the ground nearby. As the fighting line moved up or retreated, the nurses and their mobile hospital units followed. They went on to Italy, where six nurses were killed on the horrific invasion of Anzio. Because the military did not want the public to know the real dangers of joining the ANC,



Army nurses put on their gas masks after the gas has been released during an actual test, Fort Knox, Kentucky, 1945. *Courtesy of U.S. Army Signal Corps Photo, Women In Military Service For America Memorial Foundation Inc.*

these fatalities and nearly two hundred others all around the globe largely went unacknowledged.

In the spring of 1944, however, Surgeon General Norman T. Kirk took time to praise ANC efforts in the long and bloody Italian campaign. He singled out a first lieutenant from Iowa, whose ship convey had been attacked by submarines several times on the way to the Mediterranean; she served through battles in Tunisia and landed with the infantry on Sicily, pushed on through Palermo, and was bound for the Italian peninsula when her ship was bombed. “Wet and bedraggled, wearing nothing but pajamas and tennis shoes,” he said, “she got ashore and was again at work.” He also noted Lieutenant Ruth Haskell of Portland, Maine: she worked on the North African front and injured her back when the ship that was taking her to Italy lurched in a storm. Haskell did not tell anyone; instead, she joined other nurses in jumping from the ship and swimming ashore when they disembarked—with a fifty-five-pound pack on the sore back. She kept working until her spinal cord refused to do more and temporarily paralyzed her.

Thirteen ANC members were on a plane from Sicily to northern Italy when the pilot got lost in fog and crash landed in German-occupied Albania. Their ordeal—which included bombing, strafing, sniping, and possible betrayal by Nazi sympathizers—lasted from November 8, 1943 to March 18, 1944. Lieutenant Agnes Jensen, the senior nurse, later told the story of their starvation and exhaustion as they climbed through deep snow on steep mountains to the sea and a rescue ship. Amazingly enough, no one died on their eight hundred-mile zigzag route around enemy hideouts.

That the senior nurse held the lowest possible rank of second lieutenant was predictable, for most ANC members served at that rank the whole of the war. Although men with educations equivalent to those required of nurses could expect to rise in the ranks, that was rarely the case for women. Those who held the top jobs at army hospitals usually were captains, occasionally majors, but no ANC member rose above colonel. That was the rank held by ANC chief Julia Flikke and by Florence Blanchfield, who replaced Flikke midway through the war. Both commanded many more people than most colonels do, and with a corps that was spread out liter-

ally around the globe, Flikke and Blanchfield doubtless would have been generals had they been male.

Despite routine discrimination against these army women, they did heroic work with little recognition, for the government did not want to remind the public—and especially potential nurse recruits—that bombs also fell on women. Especially early in the war, the combat catastrophes that befell the ANC were classified as information that the War Department did not want to confirm for the enemy. The result was that women’s contributions went unpublicized: *National Geographic*, for example, expressed astonishment when, six months after the African invasion, it accidentally discovered that women were there.

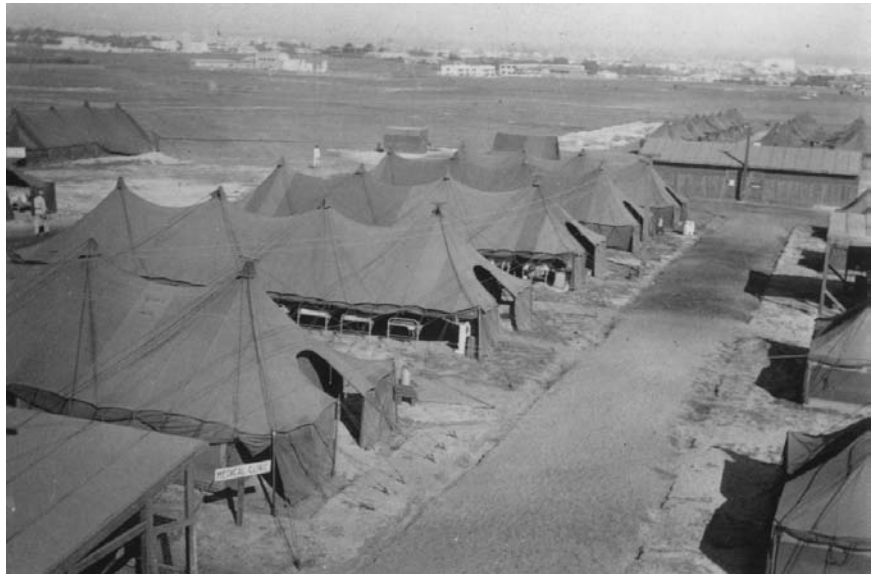
A second reason for the lack of publicity was that the media did not seek out stories of ANC heroics. The accepted image was that the Army Nurse Corps was an old institution with a staid and sensible reputation, and both Blanchfield and Flikke personified that. Reporters found it more fun to write about the new and controversial Women’s Army Corps (WAC) and the WASP (Women’s Airforce Service Pilots). Not only were these groups novel ideas, but their directors, Oveta Culp Hobby and Jacqueline Cochran, were modern young women who made for more colorful news stories.

Part of what made the WAC attention-getting and controversial was that its first class included African-American women at a ratio proportionate with the population. It was the first service to do so, while the ANC remained all-white until it was pressured to integrate by Congresswoman Bolton and others, especially Mabel Staupers of the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses. By 1943, however, black nurses landed in Scotland, and by 1944, they were serving in Australia. Males in the military were still segregated by race, and black women thus nursed black men.

As indicated by Staupers’ organization, civilian nursing associations also remained racially segregated. The umbrella group was the American Nurses’ Association (ANA), and its publication, the *American Journal of Nursing*, often featured women in these far-flung army stations—especially late in the war, after victory was sufficiently in sight that the many locations of nurses could be revealed without giving valuable



Tents often were both home and workplace for women in the Army Nurse Corps. Cold in winter and hot in summer, they also invited flies and mosquitoes—but could be moved as battle lines moved. This is the 50th Station Hospital at Casablanca in what was then French Morocco, North Africa, April 1943–May 1944. *Courtesy of Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*



information to the enemy. The ANA itself began a publication in January 1944. *The Army Nurse*, issued for twenty-one months, was edited by Edith Aynes, an assistant to Colonel Blanchfield. Aynes knew from the beginning that its coverage would be inadequate, as only 15,000 copies were printed for worldwide distribution. Nurses shared them, though, and Aynes treasured a letter from an ANC woman in Australia, who wrote that *The Army Nurse* “is one of the few ties we have learned to depend on ... when rumors run wild.”

The general media, however, did not write much about military nurses, instead giving much more coverage to non-nursing military women and to civilian nurses. For most of the war, most of the public had little idea of the extensiveness of the dangers and sacrifices that ANC women faced. Army nurses were killed in hospitals in Europe as well as in Asia, despite supposed International Red Cross protection, and ships on which they traveled were torpedoed. Some two hundred were killed, and sixteen hundred earned military decorations for bravery. They defied dangers on a daily basis, and very few sought to get out of their military commitment. From the new “flight nurses” that ferried wounded men from the mountains of Burma to those who worked in isolated places such as Iran and those who staffed the battle stations of D-Day, tens of thousands of American military nurses had the experience of their lifetimes in World War II.

The postwar world rewarded the corps with regularization that included improvements in pay, rank, and other benefits, but it was not until the Korean and Vietnam wars that discrimination against women began to disappear from official policy. Even then, nurses struggled with favoritism shown to male paramedics, who were trained at taxpayer expense and often obtained better pay in civilian jobs than nurses with superior education and experience.

*See also:* **American Nurses’ Association; Bataan; Blanchfield, Florence; Bolton Bill; decorations; European Theater of Operations; fatalities; flight nurses; Flikke, Julia;**

**hospitals; Jensen, Agnes; Navy Nurse Corps; North Africa; nurses; Nurses Selective Service Bill; Pacific Theater of Operations; Pearl Harbor; recruitment; Red Cross; uniforms; Women’s Army Corps**

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## ARTISTS

The state of the arts was not yet very advanced when World War II began; until then, most serious American artists expatriated themselves to Europe for painting and drawing. To be sure, New Deal programs to help the nation recover from the Great Depression during the 1930s had funded a good deal of folk art, especially in post offices, and a fair number of those grants went to female artists. At the same time, though, the national propensity for art can be seen in the fact that the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC did not open until 1941—just months before U.S. entrance into the war. Other priorities, of course, soon curtailed its operation.

At the beginning artist's level of work, however, the war brought new opportunity, especially in illustrating patriotic themes. The Office of War Information (OWI), for example, employed many female illustrators and photographers to communicate its various messages to the public. Some of these were women who had already established themselves with other government agencies during the Depression: photographers Dorothea Lange and Esther Bubley, for instance, switched from documenting rural poverty for the Farm Security Administration to portraying defense plant workers for the OWI. Marjory Collins also took stunning photos for that agency, especially of African-American women doing such heavy work as cleaning train locomotives with high-pressure sprayers. The photographs of Margaret Bourke-White, of course, set a milestone in capturing the horrors of war, especially in Nazi concentration camps.

In contrast to photographers, however, female illustrators received very little personal recognition. Wartime posters were an extremely important part of public educational campaigns, as posters were drawn to advertise everything from war bonds to victory gardens: indeed, women's role in the war came to be symbolized by the famed "Rosie the Riveter" that recruited women into industry.

Although many posters were drawn to influence women, the vast majority that were attributed to an individual artist had male names attached to them—the most recognizable of which was Norman Rockwell, whose career was tremendously boosted by the war. His female equivalent may have been illustrator Martha Sawyer; her name remains obscure, but she did sign some wartime posters. That was unusual: most women received no personal attribution, and their artistic work instead was buried beneath the name of the agency that employed them.

Serious artists, of course, preserved despite lack of recognition or income. Looking back through the prism of the decades, art in the 1940s began to switch from the social realism of the 1920s and 1930s to reflect images that were both less political and more abstract; it portrayed a darker

world view based on the evils of fascism, not the hopefulness of the 1930s New Deal. There was new attention to universality, including that of previously neglected minority views, especially that of Native Americans. According to art historian Charlotte Streifer Rubenstein:

American scene painting and regionalism began to seem isolationist, stale, and narrow-mindedly chauvinistic. New York became a melting pot of great European artists who had fled there ... One way in which the Americans expressed their aspirations was by ... [using] enormous canvases ... Some painters consciously tried to express the speed, energy, and raw power of American life.

Perhaps the era's greatest change came about because of Peggy Guggenheim, a wealthy patron with a new taste for the innovative. She had opened a London gallery in 1938 and planned to create a museum of modern art on the Continent when Nazi intentions became clear. As German armies moved west, she bought up works by fearful artists; when France fell in 1940, she was buying paintings at the rate of one a day. Guggenheim shipped the works to America in boxes labeled "household objects" and flew home. The next year, she married surrealist Max Ernst and opened a New York City gallery-museum.

"Art of This Century" opened there in 1942. Guggenheim promoted women as well as men, doing a solo show for Irene Pereira as well as for Jackson Pollack. In 1943, she conducted a juried exhibition titled "31 Women," the most famous of whom may be Mexican Frida Kahlo and Russian-American Louise Nevelson. A 1945 show also consisted exclusively of art by women. In 1946, the first year after the war ended, Guggenheim worked to both revitalize Italy and to introduce American art there: she moved to Venice and opened a gallery that displayed the work of modern artists.

Both her absence and the increased conservatism that follows most wars doubtless were factors in the relative decline of female artists after the war. In the Eisenhower years of the 1950s, nothing replaced the Roosevelt administration's Federal Art Project of the 1930s. Increased privatization meant greater inequities, as women received fewer grants and exhibition opportunities.

The prosperity of the 1950s and 1960s also meant that more and more wealthy people saw art as an investment. They preferred to spend money on male artists, especially those who engaged in showmanship such as throwing paint on a canvas. Even greater sums went to art dealers who sold the work of dead artists for fantastic amounts. Paintings by impressionists, cubists, and others who were penniless during their lifetimes now sold for fortunes.

A graphic example of the era's gender bias was a federally funded 1959 tour of European capitals titled "The New American Painting." It featured works by seventeen artists, only one of whom (Grace Hartigan) was a woman. Art critic Miriam Shapiro seemed to summarize the situation accurately when she said that only "a small number of amazons managed to climb into the center ring. But often they became very

prickly, sensitive, and defensive, and adopted a super-tough, one-of-the-boys stance."

Yet even if female artists did not get their fair share of recognition in the postwar world, it is indisputable that the war affected them, as it did all people. Perhaps the best example may be Californian Edna Reindel (1894–1990), whose career is chronicled in documents in Washington, DC's National Museum for Women in the Arts. Early in the war, Reindel did paintings of women at work in Los Angeles aircraft factories that were commissioned by *Life*, then probably the nation's most popular magazine. The project was her idea: she wrote a letter to an old acquaintance at *Life*, offering to do six paintings for \$1,000; she ended up getting \$1,500 and publicity in "Women at War," a June 1944 issue in which she was photographed as she painted.

These patriotic rally images very much changed, however, in Reindel's postwar paintings. Three years later, she exhibited a dark abstraction titled "Angels Weep at Los Alamos," where the atomic bomb was tested. Future titles reflected similar somberness, as in "Displaced Person," "Hiroshirma," "Monument to an Atom," "Praying Mothers," "Radioactive Head," and "Survivor."

From her Santa Monica studio, Reindel also did evocative portraits for Hollywood celebrities, including Spencer Tracy and Gregory Peck. Her work was shown at top galleries, including New York's Whitney and Washington's Corcoran, and it is part of the permanent collection of the Metropolitan Museum of Art. A *Los Angeles Times* critic summarized, "Edna Reindel is that rare phenomenon, a painter whose work is relished by good painters and the general public alike."

The Library of Congress published an assessment of art and the war in 1983, and about one-third of the artists in the compilation were women. Some of the several dozen were like Reindel, seriously devoted to their profession all of their lives; others were amateurs who portrayed an aspect of the war that was important to them personally, such as Minna Wright Citron's etching of her son, "As Tom Goes Marching to War." Their media varied from etchings to lithographs and included such obscure techniques as "linoleum block" and "sugar lift aquatint." Among the most evocative works were:

Banning, Beatrice	"Blackout"
Boyer, Helen King	"Rumor"
Coen, Eleanor	"Reprisal"
Heller, Helen West	"Magnesium Bomb"
Johann, Helen	"Next of Kin"
Katz, Hilda	"Freedom from Want"
Levy, Beatrice S.	"River of Blood"
Mock, Gladys Amy	"Fighting Fire"
Nugster, Mildred Bernice	"Warsaw, London, Coventry, etc"
Rose, Ruth Starr	"I Couldn't Hear Nobody Pray"



*See also:* Bourke-White, Margaret; Bubley, Esther; best-sellers; correspondents, war; drama; Lange, Dorothea; Office of War Information; magazines; movies; music

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## ASSOCIATION OF ARMY AND NAVY WIVES

The Air Force was not yet a separate entity in World War II and the Marine Corps was subordinate to the Navy, and so the War Department (now the Department of Defense) had just two subdivisions. The Association of Army and Navy Wives grew naturally out of that, but there were strong historical differences between these two kinds of women “married to the military.”

The professional U.S. Army was born with George Washington and the American Revolution; like Martha Washington, countless women accompanied their husbands during much of their military careers. This was especially true as the nation moved towards the Far West, as thousands of women—most of them officers’ wives—lived in remote forts during decades of conflicts with American Indians. Navy wives, however, never accompanied their husbands to sea on military ships. They often lived alone for years, and even if they did go with their husbands to an overseas station, the woman might live in Hawaii or Puerto Rico, for example, but the man still would be at sea much of the time. In such isolation, association with women in similar circumstances became very important.

World War II offered an exponential expansion opportunity, but the military’s growth to upwards of ten million men was so sudden and so massive that it ultimately overwhelmed the group. It attempted to keep up, adopting a welcoming slogan: “For every American woman with a Husband, Son, or Sweetheart in the Service.” It issued an official guide to the military’s complex world that could be used by newcomers, and the association’s wartime president, Mrs. William Bacon, corresponded with Colonel Oveta Culp Hobby, commander of the new Women’s Army Corps. The association also participated in recruitment drives and in conservation and rationing programs.

Postwar changes in military structure led to the demise of the association as such, although hundreds of thousands of women married to professional soldiers and sailors continued to be active in the Officers’ Wives Club at their husbands’ army post or naval base.

*See also:* camp followers; conservation; Hobby, Oveta Culp; rationing; recruitment; wives of servicemen; Women’s Army Corps

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## AUSTIN-WADSWORTH BILL

To understand many of the issues related to World War II, it is important to remember that other nations had been fighting for many years before the United States entered late in 1941. By then, the Japanese had conquered most of coastal China and southeast Asia; Italy and Germany had made strong inroads in North Africa; and Germany had subdued the European continent. After Germany also invaded the Soviet Union, Great Britain largely stood alone. German planes regularly bombed there, and in 1940, it literally was more dangerous to be a London housewife than to be an American soldier.

Because conditions were so dire, the British made drastic changes in their lives. Children went sent to the rural countryside or even to Canada, while their mothers went to work at manufacturing munitions and other war materiel. Men capable of military service already were in the armed forces, and women had to replace them in the factories that supplied the essentials for victory. This was no longer a matter of choice: led by Prime Minister Winston Churchill and King George VI, the government drafted women to fill labor needs in the most efficient way. As with men, exemptions were possible for personal health or family reasons, but unless they already were in some essential employment category or had joined the military, young British women could expect to be assigned to a compulsory job. The same was true, if less historically unusual, for women in the Soviet Union, which also allied with the United States.

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and global declarations of war, many Americans believed that the United States should emulate the system created by Britain and Russia. Dramatic headlines appeared: “Draft for Women” proclaimed *Business Week*, while *Independent Woman* asserted that “There Must Be No Idle Women.” “Shall We Draft Women?” *The Nation* proposed, and even *Woman’s Home Companion* startled its audience with “Should Women Be Drafted?” Although “draft” meant compulsory (and paid) civilian work, not a military draft, the idea stirred a great deal of controversy.

Much more than Democrats, it was Republicans in Congress who pushed for such compulsion. Representative

Joseph C. Baldwin, a New York Republican, introduced a 1942 bill “providing for the registration of women between the ages of 18 and 65 under the Selective Training and Service Act.” It died without hearings in the House, but the Senate paid considerably more attention to the issue. Several bills were introduced in the 1942–43 session, the chief of which was Senate Bill 666, known as the National War Service Act or the Austin-Wadsworth Bill.

Both sponsors were Republicans from the Northeast; Warren Austin was from Vermont, while Joseph Wadsworth was a Yale-educated New Yorker. Austin worked particularly hard on the bill, which aimed “to provide further for the successful prosecution of the war through a system of civilian selective service.” It called for registration of women 18 to 50 (men 18 to 65 already had registered with the Office of Selective Service), but more important, the bill required both men and women to work at whatever civilian job they were assigned. Pregnant women and those with children under 18 were exempt, but the proposed law nonetheless represented a major historical shift in the status of women.

Austin-Wadsworth supporters believed that the situation was sufficiently critical to put aside time-honored maxims about women’s proper place being in the home and instead to compel them to do war work. “It is dangerous,” Austin said, “to postpone this legislation. Such postponement has the immediate effect of deficiency in production and transportation.” He pointed out that at that very time, while SB 666 was being debated in a committee, a “mission from General [Arthur] MacArthur was in Washington begging for planes. Five hundred planes to MacArthur in February probably would have saved the lives of many of our brave boys.”

A coalition of senators agreed with him. Five other bills had been introduced on the subject, all sponsored by men who were Republicans or conservative Democrats from the Deep South—Senators Reynolds of North Carolina, Hill of Alabama, Bilbo of Mississippi, McKellar of Tennessee, and Taft (“Mr. Conservative”) of Ohio. Perhaps because of their animosity towards Democratic President Franklin Roosevelt in the pre-Pearl Harbor days, when he tried to warn them of war, they were anxious to outdo him. Perhaps, as some believed, their proposal for compulsory labor actually was an attempt to break unions and lower wages. Whatever the motivation, though, this radical change in women’s roles came from men who saw themselves as conservatives.

Patriotic organizations such as the American Legion (and its female auxiliary) supported the legislation, and a Citizens Committee for a National War Service Act was formed; it was led by an Alabama man and vice-chaired by Henry D. Cabot, whose Massachusetts family included longtime Republican stalwarts. Ignoring the usual rhetoric on women, home, and family, they eagerly supported the bill. They may have sincerely believed in this compulsory approach, but it is also possible that they wanted to create what they expected would become a political problem for the Democratic president. More surprising, though, is the fact that other, less partisan

congressmen also dropped the expected platitudes on women from their comments.

Instead, debate centered on such issues as whether it was consistent with democratic principles to draft anyone, male or female, for civilian jobs on which a corporation made a profit. Other questions were whether this would be best accomplished by legislation or by executive order; what the proper method would be of carrying out such a labor transfer; whether the legislation was an attack on organized labor; and most importantly, whether it was needed at this time. Other than perfunctory assurances that the sanctity of the home would be protected, there was no particular attention paid to the issue of drafting *women*.

Secretary of War Henry Stimson gave his support to the bill, but other Roosevelt administration officials said that labor shortages were not yet that dire, and they warned that premature programs could do more harm than good. Thelma McKelvey, women’s representative on the War Production Board, told *Independent Woman* that it would be “unwise to raise the enthusiasm of women and then see that enthusiasm turn to skepticism because a sufficient number of outlets for their productive energies have not yet developed.” The U.S. Employment Service chief agreed, saying in the same publication that “a compulsory registration of women at this time . . . would be a handicap to any future *necessary* registration.”

Selective Service spokesmen echoed that view. They issued a report on the British and Russian systems of compulsory allocation of female labor and concluded that drafting women would present no problem for them administratively—but the report questioned the value of such a nationwide effort unless America’s situation became as grave as that of the allies. Other administration officials, including the head of the War Manpower Commission Paul McNutt, said the same. These experts were not opposed to the concept of registering and drafting women, but they thought the Austin-Wadsworth approach was both heavy-handed and simplistic: labor shortages were local, not national, and this was not a problem best solved by creating a bureaucracy that required every woman from Maine to California to sign up for a potential draft.

The public consistently told pollsters that they were willing to be called for an industrial draft if the government so decided. Just a month after the war began, 68 percent of a Gallup poll agreed with “starting now to draft single women between the ages of 21 and 35 to train them for wartime jobs.” More women than men were supportive (73 to 63 percent), and more surprisingly, when the question was asked of those most likely to be subject to this draft, an amazing 91 percent of the potential draftees agreed that “the government should draft persons to fill war jobs.”

There were exceptions. Far from agreeing with a draft, *Catholic World* opined that “we might ponder whether there should even be such a thing as women in industry.” The editorial went on to assert that “women have a special . . . duty — that of being the heart of the home. Let us realize that God made women to be mothers.” Oswald Garrison Villard, grandson of the great Civil War abolitionist William Lloyd



Garrison, expressed a similar view in *Christian Century*. Most magazine editors, however, took a middle route: they enthusiastically ran articles encouraging women to take war jobs, but were hesitant about compulsion and preferred to accent the positive approach.

That was the policy eventually adopted by the White House. Roosevelt, who was so often accused of regimentation by his Republican opponents, decided against compulsory registration, and without his approval, the National War Service Act never came to a vote. Later opinion polls continued to support the possibility of an industrial draft, as citizens demonstrated faith in their government and a willingness to accept the drafting of women as a potential solution for future needs. But unless the war became worse, the natural inclination of true democrats was that compulsion be avoided. In the end, women went to work on their own and did what needed to be done.

*See also:* **British women; draft; Nurses Selective Service Bill; recruitment; Russian women; War Manpower Commission**

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## AVENGER FIELD

This dramatically-named airfield was home to the Women's Airforce Service Pilots, more commonly called WASP. Organized by Jacqueline Cochran early in the war, WASPs initially were based at Howard Hughes Airfield near Houston, Texas, but all training classes were moved to Avenger in the spring of 1943, when male aviation cadets vacated the relatively new field near Sweetwater, Texas. For a couple of weeks, men and women shared the facility—a first in military history—including enthusiastic competition in classrooms and on the airfield.

Located in west Texas and closer to the New Mexico border than to Dallas/Fort Worth, Avenger offered a low civilian population and flat, open land for safer flying—but the treeless landscape also brought drying summer heat and biting sandstorms when the wind blew. In an era prior to air conditioning, WASPs moved their beds out of the barracks and slept outside on stifling hot nights. Other, less skilled members of the military did not enjoy that sort of freedom, but, even at the basic training stage, the WASP was a relatively informal, close-knit organization.

The very first women to arrive lived at the Sweetwater Hotel, but soon all trainees moved into barracks designed for six women per room, with a latrine and shower available to every two rooms, or twelve women. As at other military posts, trainees at Avenger endured regular Saturday morning inspections of their spartan barracks: the only furniture a trainee could have was her rather small bed, with a foot locker at its base and a standing locker at its head.

The remote site also meant a lack of socialization opportunities, and Sweetwater residents initially were not welcoming to these unusual female aviators. After Cochran arranged a barbeque—and required her WASPs to attend church services—relationships blossomed. At Avenger itself, they had a large recreation room with a jukebox, movie projector, and ping-pong table. Another favorite feature of the base was "the wishing well," an unused rock fountain in which they not only tossed coins for good luck, but also dunked each other after passing flight tests.

WASPs, however, were too busy for much fun. Soon after they moved on to Avenger, *Life* reported a few months later that in "a regimented 22 weeks," trainees "were on the go from 6:15 in the morning till 10:00 at night." They did calisthenics and marched in drill formation; they went to classes and flew, including open-cockpit planes with the instructor behind the trainee, and later, night-flying assignments. Because only experienced pilots were allowed to join the WASP, their curriculum was, in *Life's* words, "a stepped-up version of the nine-month course developed for male aviation cadets." Except for formation flying and gunnery, they learned "everything that regular Army pilots master."

*The Avenger*, a weekly newsletter published there, had as its motto "News from the Mother Hive of the Army WASPs." It featured flying tips, interviews with experienced WASPs, and ads for Sweetwater businesses. Commander Cochran had her headquarters at Avenger, and after the Spring, 1944 class graduated, the commencement speaker added a plaque to the wishing well that reads: "To The Best Women Pilots In The World, General H.H. 'Hap' Arnold, March 11, 1944." Arnold was the very popular head of the Army Air Force.

Avenger Field was the first all-female military installation in American history, and more than a thousand women were based there; of the eighteen WASP classes, all but the first two trained there. When Congress abruptly canceled the WASP program in December 1944, Avenger closed. Nothing remains except its runways—and a small monument commemorating the thirty-eight WASPs who lost their lives in the service of

their country. Plans are underway, however, for a proposed National WASP Museum there.

**See also:** **aviators, civilian; Cochran, Jacqueline; underutilization; WASP**

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## AVIATORS, CIVILIAN

Because aviation began in the early twentieth century at the same time that the feminism movement was beginning to gain public acceptance, men had no time-honored claim on flying, and women also quickly learned the new skill. America’s first credentialed female pilot, for example, was Harriet Quimby, who earned her license in 1911, as soon as licenses were developed and just five years after the Wright Brothers patented their flying machine. Quimby was killed a few months later near Boston, but sisters Katherine and Marjorie Stinson soon followed her as licensed pilots; the Stinsons ran a Texas aviation school prior to World War I. In the 1920s, Marie Meyer’s Flying Circus was a huge hit at midwestern summer events, as was daredevil aviator Pacho Barnes in California. Bessie Coleman, the world’s first black of either gender to be a licensed pilot, died like Quimby, falling from her open plane to her death during a 1926 air show. In the last year of that decade, Amelia Earhart became the first president of the Ninety-Nines Club—named for the ninety-nine licensed female pilots who began it.

By 1940 and World War II, thousands of women were pilots—but instead of the career progress that the war offered most women, female aviators regressed. This was because the only opportunity open to them was the Women’s Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) and its predecessor, the Women’s Auxilliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS). Women had to be experienced aviators to join either, and female pilots who had children also were banned. Nor did Congress or the War Department intend for the WASP to grow very large, something that is easily seen in the numbers: some 25,000 women applied to join the WASP, but fewer 2,000 were accepted.

The result was that many skilled pilots were grounded,

unable to fly for four years. Because airplane fuel was too precious to use for non-defense purposes, civilian women could not obtain it and therefore could not maintain their skills—or learn to fly the new types of aircraft built during the war. Many licensed female pilots instead were forced to spend the war in classrooms, teaching male cadets who may have never seen the interior of a plane.

Others, including Louise Thaden of Arkansas—who was so skilled that she had defeated Amelia Earhart in the first Women’s Air Derby—worked with the Civil Air Patrol that watched for enemy planes, but this was no substitute for flying. Thaden had children and therefore was banned from the sky.

Women never recovered from the setback in this area: when the war ended, tens of thousands of male pilots had been trained at government expense, while women who had made financial sacrifices and taken real risks to be licensed in the prewar days found themselves with obsolete skills, unable to compete for new jobs with expanding airlines.

**See also:** **Civil Air Patrol; underutilization; Women’s Auxilliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS); Women’s Airforce Service Pilots (WASP)**

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## “AXIS SALLY”

The pseudonym for Mildred Gillars, “Axis Sally” broadcast in English on German radio with the intent of encouraging American soldiers to desert. She first hit the airwaves in 1940, before the United States entered the war, and continued until the very last day of fighting in the European Theater of Operations, May 8, 1945.

She was Mildred Elizabeth Sisk when she was born in 1900 in Portland, Maine; her surname became Gillars when her mother divorced and remarried a few years later. An aspiring actor, Gillars lived in Europe in 1929 and again in 1933, when Adolf Hitler’s Nazis were ascending in government. She moved permanently to Germany in 1935, where she taught English and pursued a relationship with a former Columbia University professor who admired fascism. His contacts with the government led to her broadcasts on Radio Berlin.

Hitler’s government so valued Gillars’ propaganda work that she was the highest-paid radio personality in wartime Germany. The name of her program also reflected Hitler’s idea of women’s proper place: he famously said that women should concentrate on “kuchen, kinder, and kirke” (kitchen,

children, and church), and Gillars’ program was titled “Home, Sweet Home.” Not exactly domestic in her style, however, she used a sexy voice in broadcasts heard late at night, when soldiers were most likely to be thinking of home and family. She could be heard all over Europe, North Africa, and across the Atlantic, even to the east coast of the United States.

Gillars caused a great deal of emotional pain, especially by claiming to know the fate of specific men who were missing in action. Extremely right wing in her ideology, she ranted against Roosevelt, Democrats, and especially Jews; she professed to love her native land, but despised its liberalism. Despite all this, however, she had relatively little influence. Almost all Allied soldiers were convinced of the justice of their cause, and it was they who derisively dubbed her “Axis Sally,” while she called herself “Midge at the Mike.”

*Life* photojournalist Margaret Bourke-White spent countless nights in army camps, and she wrote of a north Italian bunker in late winter of 1943:

It was very cozy in our little cave ... We turned on our radio, and ... then came a woman’s voice, speaking perfect Manhattanesse ...

“Hello, Suckers,” said Sally. “How would you like to be in good old Wisconsin tonight? It would be nice going out with your best girl, wouldn’t it? But don’t worry about your sweethearts. They’re having a good time. There are plenty of men who stayed back in America who can take your girls to dances tonight.

Planting such suspicions about women’s faithfulness was intended to break down soldiers’ morale—and that few men took this bait is testimony to their trust in American

women. The military also operated on trust and respect for soldiers’ freedom: Axis Sally was derided, but not banned. The American music played between her commentary was the great draw, and many soldiers first heard the swing music classics of the 1940s on German radio. Despite the massive fascist effort, American women and men abroad proved capable of distinguishing between the music they enjoyed and the propaganda they despised.

In a 1949 trial in Washington, D.C., Gillars was convicted of treason. The evidence was exceptionally strong: her broadcasts had been taped by officials near Washington, and unlike “Tokyo Rose,” who argued that she was forced to do similar broadcasts in Japan, Gillars worked of her own free will. She spent the next twelve years in the federal prison for women at Alderson, West Virginia, and died in 1988, after teaching in an Ohio school for Catholic girls.

*See also:* **Bourke-White, Margaret; correspondents, war; European Theater of Operations; music; radio; Tokyo Rose**

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## **BALCH, EMILY GREENE (1867–1961)**

Boston's Emily Greene Balch won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1946, the year following the war. She was the second American woman to win it, following only her friend Jane Addams.

Addams, Balch, and others had traveled extensively in Europe during World War I, meeting with heads of state and trying to negotiate an end to that futile blood-letting. When Balch lost her position as a pioneering sociologist at Wellesley College because of her opposition to that war, and she moved to Switzerland and became the primary founder of the Geneva-based Women's International League for Peace and Freedom.

Neutral Switzerland offered refuge to many people fleeing fascism in the 1930s, and Balch began emphasizing the "freedom" portion of her organization's name more than the "peace" portion. Unlike World War I, which was the last of Europe's interminable clashes of royal families, World War II presented new and terrifying dictators with Spain's Franco, Italy's Mussolini, and especially Germany's Hitler.

Balch opposed them, and although now in her seventies, she spoke out strongly during the 1930s against Japan's attack on Manchuria, Italy's bombing of Ethiopia, and Germany's persecution of its Jews. "Neutrality in the sense of treating the aggressor and the victim alike," she said, "is morally impossible."

When the European war officially began in 1939, she returned to the United States, where she worked for imprisoned Japanese Americans and for Jews trying to escape from Europe. The 1946 Nobel Prize, awarded by neutral Sweden, honored Balch for her lifetime commitment to peace with freedom. She was only the third woman to win it: Austria's Bertha von Suttner was first in 1901; Addams'

award was in 1931; and more than a decade passed before Balch was honored.

She participated in meetings that led to the United Nations and spoke regularly on peace issues throughout the world. In addition to writing on international issues for *The Nation*, Balch published books on her academic specialty of immigration, as well as on the peace movement during and after World War I. She died in Cambridge, Massachusetts, just prior to her ninetieth birthday.

*See also:* **Japanese Americans; refugees; United Nations; Women's International League for Peace and Freedom**

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## **BANDEL, BETTY (1912–)**

Born in Washington, D.C., Betty Bandel headed the Air Transport Command of the Women's Army Corps (WAC), more commonly called the "Air WAC." She grew up in Tucson and graduated from the University of Arizona in 1933. After working as a journalist for the *Arizona Daily Star*, she became one of the elite women chosen for the stellar



first class of the experimental WAAC, or Women's Auxiliary Army Corps, which later became the WAC.

Graduating second in that highly intelligent first class of female army officers at Fort Des Moines, Iowa, she went on to the national capital as an aide to WAC commander Oveta Culp Hobby. Bandel's military rank rose meteorically from lieutenant to captain to major in less than a year; she also acted as Hobby's deputy director.

She was still a lieutenant in November of 1942, when Bandel traveled to England along with "Rover," the code name that the Secret Service used for Eleanor Roosevelt. Roosevelt connected Bandel with the very top people, including the king, queen, and Dwight D. Eisenhower, who commanded the European Theater of Operations (ETO). Bandel's chief purpose, however, was to slip away from the entourage and check on WAACs newly assigned to the ETO. Like others, she was cheerful when she wrote to her mother about "the necessary inconveniences of travelling [sic] in a war-torn country, & eating potatoes & cabbage 3 times a day, & being cold."

She won the separate command of the Air Transport Command in 1943, partly in response to falling WAC recruitment. An advertising and enlistment campaign aimed to reassure women that they would not necessarily be assigned to kitchen and laundry duty, but instead could be part of the more glamorous air war. Despite official disapproval of the term, the public soon called these women "Air WACs," and the new unit brought in 27,047 women in fourteen months. Bandel wrote from Washington in May 1943:

I have been running around like a chicken with its head off, but I feel that I have got something done—or at least started—in the right direction. When I hit the Air Forces, I found we were receiving companies left and right, with very little preparation ... So I have run around between the various parts of the air staff (Assistant Chiefs of Staff) practically at a trot for the whole two weeks, and I think we now have worked out the beginning of a pretty good system. I am up in a little cubby hole on the fifth floor of the Pentagon, way away from WAAC headquarters. I have three Waacs with me ...

The job I must begin immediately, and that I conceive of as my principal responsibility, is the job of orienting the women in the Air Forces—seeing that they get settled on the job, that the posts learn what they can do, that their housing and well-being and what not is all set up for them ... Meanwhile, six hundred people a day in the Air Forces who know little or nothing about Waacs but would like to some Waacs to work for them call up my office to find out what it is all about.

The executive ability that it took to organize this entirely new command earned Bandel promotion to lieutenant colonel, just one grade below Hobby, in 1944. She never rose to full colonel, however, despite responsibilities in both quantity of women under her command and the quality of leadership skills needed. At the war's end, she did win the prestigious Legion of Merit.

Bandel then earned a 1951 doctorate in English at Co-

lumbia University with a dissertation that predated modern feminist scholarship. "Shakespeare's Treatment of the Social Position of Women" pointed out the greater freedoms women had enjoyed in the era of Elizabeth I, something that too many in the academic canon had forgotten four centuries later. Never marrying, Bandel taught at the University of Vermont from 1947 to her 1975 retirement.

*See also:* **Air WACs; European Theater of Operations; Fort Des Moines; Hobby, Oveta Culp; recruitment; Roosevelt, Eleanor; underutilization; Women's Army Corps**

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## BANDS, MILITARY

Except for the Navy's WAVES, all of the non-nursing women's military services had bands and/or "drum and bugle corps" composed of women with previous musical experience. The Women's Army Corps (WAC) had two full-time bands, one each for black and white members, as well as bands made up of women who had another military occupational specialty and played only part-time. They performed at many events, as martial music was essential to recruitment parades, rallies for bond sales and conservation promotion, and ceremonies for civilian production awards and military decorations. Wounded men in hospitals especially appreciated appearances by these all-female bands, and families found them comforting at funerals.

The forty-three women who played in the Marine Corps Women's Reserve Band, for example, played at many events to sell Liberty Bonds. "The work," said Marine historian Mary V. Stremlow, "may have seemed glamorous ... but they toured in crowded, poorly maintained buses and carried heavy instruments" for parades, even in "the pouring rain." Charlotte Plummer ignored these problems, however, reflected happily on her years in the Women's Marine Band:

Music was our full-time job. We rehearsed in the mornings and in the afternoons. We played all sorts of concerts,... at the mess halls,... at the troop trains [and] ... three war bond tours. At one time, the [male] Marine Band came through ... It was a nice opportunity for me, because Captain [William] Santelmann asked me to be a guest conductor. It was great fun and it meant a lot to my career.

Even in the WAVES, which did not have an official band, having high school or college band experience could prove



WACs march at a Des Moines, Iowa parade. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

valuable because of it meant that a woman had learned marching. According to records at the University of Central Arkansas, for example, Iowa's Maxine Bigger was promoted to Section Leader in the WAVES as soon as she enlisted, largely because she had six years of marching experience from school bands. The same was true when she went on for specialized training in Milledgeville, Georgia, where her marching leadership meant that she was named Company Commander.

The WAVES, SPARS, and Women's Marines were not welcoming to black women, but the Women's Army Corps (WAC) accepted African Americans from its beginning—in segregated units commanded by black women. Both WAC bands were based at its initial basic training center of Fort Des Moines, Iowa, and like the Women's Marine band, both traveled and played for recruitment rallies, parades, and other events aimed at their race. Martha Putney featured an African-American trumpeter on the cover of her book about black WACs.

A member of the WAC's African-American band, Sergeant Gurthalee Clark, believed that it was the popularity of the black band that caused a threat of ending it: she told music historian Sherrie Tucker that she lost her sergeant stripes and was assigned to other work until a letter-writing campaign by Mary McLeod Bethune and others corrected the situation. After the war, Clark joined one of the era's "all-girl" bands and later formed her own racially integrated all-woman combo in Los Angeles.

WAC leadership fretted endlessly over the image of the new corps, but it was theatrical skits and USO-type shows more than bands that invited the "slander campaign" that demeaned women in the military. Uniformed bands were traditional in the male military, and the public expected them in the women's corps. At the same time, WAC Director Oveta Culp Hobby worried that taxpayers might consider the cost of maintaining bands—with their instruments, travel expenses, special uniforms and more—to be frivolous. Tax-

payers, though, clearly wanted to see these women, and they wanted to see the marchers, as well as the musicians. WAC historian Mattie Treadwell wrote of the complexities for the new corps, which, of course, was a fraction of the size of the male military:

Military posts were accustomed to contributing a company to grace patriotic occasions in nearby communities, but could ordinarily divide the honor among a number of companies. Since the WAC ordinarily had only one company at a station, and was in great demand as a curiosity, its members were frequently forced to augment their military schedules with long marches in local parades, often with the loss of most of a working day. Colonel Hobby stated forcibly to WAC staff officers her opinion that "they must not be pulled off their jobs because someone wants to see a parade ..." [but] civilian patriotic groups were numerous and their requests not only incessant but difficult to refuse diplomatically ...

Colonel Hobby on one occasion received a telephoned request ... that she "force" the Commanding General ... to ship his WAC band from New York to Philadelphia, at Army expense, for the bond parade sponsored by the Philadelphia War Finance Committee. In other cases, civilian groups [that were] refused by the commanding general of a service command, appealed to Congressmen who forced the commanding general to yield. No reasonable compromise solution to the problem ever was discovered.

Women's military bands merit more research from historians, but the probability is that performing in these bands offered many women the opportunity to keep their musical skills sharp after high school or college. Bands gave their members an unusual chance to travel, gain poise, and even to work with celebrities. More than many military occupational specialties, this one was transferable and lifelong. Military bands provided credentials for teaching and performing in the postwar world, as well as a sense of making people feel better during the war with music.

**See also:** African-American women; Bethune, Mary McLeod; bonds; conservation; decorations; Des Moines, Fort; fatalities; Hobby, Oveta Culp; hospitals; Marines, Women; military occupational speciality; music; recruitment; "slander campaign"; SPARS; USO; WAVES; Women's Army Corps

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## BARRINGER, EMILY DUNNING (1876–1961)

A 1901 graduate of prestigious Cornell University Medical School, Dr. Barringer lobbied during World War II for greater use of female physicians by the military. In her late sixties by that time, she lived in New Canaan, Connecticut, had reared three children, and was president of the American Medical Woman's Association.

The 1950 film, *The Girl in White*, focused on her struggle to be accepted at New York's Gouverneur Hospital prior to the first world war. New York women had been credentialed physicians since Elizabeth Blackwell in 1849, and Barringer's mentor, Dr. Mary Putnam Jacobi, had achieved an honored place in the medical profession a generation earlier—but women arguably went backwards in this field during the first half of the twentieth century.

It is indisputable that World War II military leadership maintained a ceaseless cry for nurses, while ignoring simultaneous applications from well-qualified female physicians. With Dr. Barringer's leadership, and with editorial crusades in women's and news magazines, Congress held hearings on the issue. In April 1943, it passed the Sparkman Act that insisted the military utilize the abilities of female physicians.

*See also:* hospitals; magazines; nurses; physicians, female; underutilization

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## BATAAN

This small peninsula on the main Philippine island of Luzon was where some eighty thousand Americans (and Filipino allies) retreated in late December 1941, when the capital city of Manila fell. After months of fierce fighting without supplies, about seventy thousand starving soldiers would be forced into the infamous "Bataan Death March" in early April. Their Japanese conquerors marched these men sixty miles to trains that took them to prison camps, killing the sick and starving if they stumbled on the way. Some fourteen thousand died on the march.

Most members of the Army Nurse Corps (ANC) evacuated Manila on Christmas Day, joining other American troops in retreating to Bataan. Unaware of how much damage had been done to the Pacific fleet when the Japanese bombed Hawaii's Pearl Harbor on December 7th, nurses thought they would be on Bataan only a few weeks before a victorious U.S. Navy would rescue them.

Instead they found themselves running a "hospital" that spread out for miles in the jungle, living with snakes and rats and monkeys that stole the little food they had. One woman, D. D. Engles, wrote later:

Little did I dream that we would be always hungry, always frightened. That we would grab shovels and help dig fox-holes so we would have some shelter to crawl into when the dive-bombers came. That we would all suffer malaria and dysentery and diarrhea. It was a good thing for all of us that we had no idea what we were getting into.

At Camp Limay on the north end of Bataan, a Navy nurse later told the *New Yorker*: "Everybody worked from seven in the morning until ten at night, and then tried to break away and get some sleep ... Wounded men would be waiting in lines of stretchers." According to ANC chief Julia Flikke, who worried helplessly from Washington, tents were so scarce that nurses slept—when they could—in hammocks that were "frail triple-deckers fashioned of bamboo and rattan ... unsheltered except for trees." Mosquito netting was rare, and malaria from the nighttime pests did almost as much damage as the daytime raids of Japanese planes.

Some locations were worse than others, but everywhere, nurses were called upon to invent new strategies of patient care. The few beds that they had were taken apart for double use, with one patient on the ground, using the mattress, and another on the above-ground rails and springs. Supplies were so short that Flikke wrote of a nurse in charge of three hundred patients whose entire equipment consisted of fifteen thermometers, six medicine glasses, and one teaspoon. New patients constantly arrived, and by the time Bataan fell, the patient/nurse ratio was almost three hundred to one. They had male assistants, though, and nurse Juanita Redmond said:

Yet with all our difficulties, we had a smooth-running, big hospital ... I could look up the hill and identify the patients [in her orthopedic ward] by their "hung" extremities; for instance, the two arms protruding in the air marked the bed of Jose ... In the Surgery Ward, I might see Hogan clambering



On their way home wearing new uniforms, these Army nurses, trapped on Bataan and captured on Corregidor by the Japanese, were liberated after three years as POWs in Santo Tomas Internment Camp; Manila, the Philippines, February 1945. *Courtesy of US Army Signal Corp*



up a crude ladder to reach a patient on the top of a three-decker ... The operating room was always functioning.

Despite the huge Red Crosses that they painted on the ground, on tents, and anywhere possible, their hospitals were repeatedly bombed. Knowing that there would be no anti-aircraft guns, Japanese pilots came defiantly close, and the hospital staff dubbed one "Photo Joe." They could see him taking post-bombing photographs for analysis of the damage they had done. The worst attack in Redmond's experience came "at ten o'clock on Easter Monday":

The first wave of bombers struck us. I pulled myself to my feet. Precious medicines were dripping and I tried to salvage as much as possible. In the Orthopedic ward nurses and corpsmen began to cut the traction ropes so that the patients could roll out of bed if necessary, broken bones and all. In my ward several of the men became hysterical; I would have joined them if I could.

This time they scored a direct hit on the wards. A thousand-pound bomb pulverized the bamboo sheds, smashed the tin roofs into flying pieces; the iron beds broke jaggedly like paper matches. Sergeant May had pulled me under a desk, but the desk was blown into the air, he and I with it.

Only a small section of my ward remained standing. There were mangled torsos almost impossible to identify. One of the few corpsmen who had survived unhurt climbed into a tree to bring down a body blown into the top branches. We worked wildly, the air rent by the awful screams of the new-wounded and dying, trees still crashing. I saw Rosemary Hogan being helped from her ward. Blood streamed from her face and shoulder. Several of my boys had died of shock; they hadn't been hit, they had been too weak to live through the explosion.

The bombing left only sixty-five of the hospital's sixteen hundred makeshift beds undamaged. "That night," Redmond continued, there were many burials. We tried not to hear the scraping of the spades or the thud of earth thrown on earth." Nurses and doctors repeatedly donated their own blood to save the wounded. "Days and nights were an endless nightmare," recalled Eunice Hatchitt, "until it seemed we couldn't

stand it any longer ... Nurses worked continuously under the tents amid the flies and heat and dust. We had from eight to nine hundred victims a day."

Some were Japanese. These prisoners of war were in a ward by themselves, and Juanita Redmond wrote:

One day I was assisting in Surgery when a Japanese soldier was brought in with a broken arm which had been badly set and was now causing complications. The doctors decided to break and reset it. The instant the anesthetist started to put him to sleep, he jumped off the table and raced all around the room ... The Philippine-born interpreter said, with a touch of scorn, that he was shrieking:

"Don't kill me. Please don't kill me!"

We tried to make him understand that we weren't doing anything of the kind ... but he kept on crying ... When he returned to consciousness no interpreter was needed. He was the most surprised Jap I ever saw. He seized our hands and hissed and jabbered his gratitude and amazement; it was pitiful, and somehow embarrassing.

Prisoners got their share of the scarce food, of course, and thus the nurses' exhaustion was intensified by starvation. When the soldiers went on half-rations in January, so did they. Their two daily "meals" were breakfast, no more than fritters or a little oatmeal, and supper, which consisted of rice and stew made with water buffalo or horse meat. Once they enjoyed some unusually tasty stew; a little later, nurses noticed that a pet monkey was nowhere to be seen. At the end, a full day's ration was a half-cup of rice with a few slivers of mule meat.

Yet morale remained good. Even when the Japanese ignored the Red Crosses and bombed the hospital area, killing more than one hundred patients, the nurses reacted with anger, not despair. They commented on how seldom their patients complained, and they tried to cheer the men with little things. "We had been able to bring along some rouge, powder, lipstick and our toothbrushes," said Engles. "Every day we took our baths and washed our coveralls in the nearby creek." Sometimes they sang in the quiet jungle night.



Redmond added that “we worked in coveralls, which were ugly and much too big” and that “what was left of our cosmetics was hoarded like a miser’s gold”—but still, “there were party occasions of a sort.” The best was onboard:

the gunboat, *Canopus*, heir to supplies removed from Cavite before the village was bombed. The nurses had a standing invitation to dinner on board, and occasionally some of us managed to take advantage of it. Inez MacDonald and I went one day and were almost overcome by nostalgia at the sight of silver and table linen ... When the Chaplain said good night he handed each a lollypop; we could hardly believe our eyes.

She went on, though, to acknowledge that their visit was risky. Although the ship was “well camouflaged, it had been spotted by the Japanese, bombed and almost sunk. However, everyone was taking chances all the time,” she argued with herself, adding that other nurses took the chance of climbing “to the top branches of a tall tree ... from which we could look over the bay. If there were ships coming to our rescue we could see them from there.”

Redmond wrote, too, of a pregnant “Chinese *mestiza*, or half-caste, [who] had come to the jungle to be with her husband, an American soldier:”

We fixed a place for the mother ... and until the birth was over, we seemed to have a whole ward of expectant fathers ... The baby was pretty and blue-eyed and by far the most popular person ... The patients who could sit up to gaze it her and those who couldn’t move demanded to see her, while wistful eyes and soft clucking noises followed her as she passed by. She was promptly named Bataana ...

When the mother took Bataana away to her quarters further in the jungle, the whole camp felt lonely and let-down. There is something very normal and reassuring about a baby; small Bataana’s presence was like a pledge that some day life would be sane and sweet again.

But that would not be soon. What contact they could make with the outside world via radio gave them only bad news. As they searched the sky for planes that did not come, and vainly climbed their tall tree to study the sea for ships, it was hard not to feel that their nation had abandoned them. The men, perhaps more cynical than the nurses, sang a ditty:

We’re the battling bastards of Bataan;  
No Mama, No Papa, No Uncle Sam;  
No aunts, no uncles, no cousins, no nieces;  
No pills, no planes, no artillery pieces ...  
...And nobody gives a damn.

When they finally heard arriving troops, it was not Americans. On the “evening of April 7th at six o’clock heavy artillery shells burst through the jungles around our base,” said Redmond. “Still unknown to us, Bataan was falling. Fort Drum, Fort Hughes, and Corregidor were firing on Bataan beyond our retreating troops, trying to hold back the Japanese.” Nurses evacuated on buses, and civilians “banged on the sides of the bus, pleading with us to take them. It was

horrible to catch glimpses through the dark of their panic-stricken faces.”

When the bus left them on the dock, some nurses were so exhausted that they fell asleep on its wooden boards. At midnight, Redmond and her friends scurried into a small, unarmed boat. Although they found themselves “under cross-fire from Corregidor and the enemy lines on Bataan,” they managed to get out and eventually flew to Australia. Most nurses did the same, but several dozen others did not get to the docks in time.

Some shoved off on their own, taking rowboats to the next fallback position of Corregidor. Eunice Hatchitt was one of fifteen who managed to catch a small steamer that was trying to dodge Japanese planes. “It steamed back to the dock,” she said, “and more women got aboard, just in time. A few minutes later ... the Japs blasted the piece of roadway to bits.”

A day after Juanita Redmond escaped from Bataan to Corregidor, she wrote of the arriving “girls from Hospital No. 2.”

Their experience had been horrible. They had been ordered to leave ... but on the way they learned that the docks had already been taken by the Japanese. Loaded in garbage trucks they tried to reach Mariveles, but wrecked cars, army and civilian traffic, and a destroyed ammunition dump kept them hours on the road. As, finally, they reached the waterfront, they saw the last inter-island boat steam away ...

The girls were frantic. In desperation, a few managed to find places on barges and rough tugs that were attempting the crossing, but the majority were stranded on the docks, until at last a boat was sent out from Corregidor.

Some of those who escaped all the way to Australia would be honored at a White House ceremony that summer, but eighty-seven nurses were trapped on Corregidor. After it fell, almost three years passed before liberating troops finally came to the Philippines, where upwards of a thousand women, mostly civilians, were prisoners of war in Manila.

**See also: Army Nurse Corps; Corregidor; decorations; Flikke, Julia; food; Hogan, Rosemary; hospitals; nurses; Navy Nurse Corps; Pacific Theater of Operations; Pearl Harbor; prisoners of war; Red Cross**

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## BELLANCA, DOROTHY JACOBS (1894–1946)

A native of Latvia, Dorothy Bellanca had a long career as a labor organizer prior to the World War II, but she continued and expanded on that work during the war. She had been elected to the executive board of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America in 1916, when she was just twenty-one years old, and prior to marrying Italian-American labor leader August Bellanca. They lived in New York City, and she devoted her whole life to improving the economic position of women.

In World War II, she served as an adviser to the Department of Labor on the employment of women in defense industries and was appointed to the powerful War Manpower Commission, which—despite its name—also dealt with women in the labor force. Childless herself, she worked with the wartime U.S. Committee for the Care of European Children. Eleanor Roosevelt spoke at a Chicago luncheon in Bellanca's honor in 1944, shortly before her death from cancer.

*See also:* **Roosevelt, Eleanor; unions; War Manpower Commission**

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## BENEDICT, RUTH FULTON (1887–1948)

A pioneer anthropologist, Benedict graduated from Vassar in 1909 and married; she did not complete her Columbia doctorate until 1923—but then she made major contributions to modern thought that were important in dealing with both Europeans and Asians during and after World War II.

In *Patterns of Culture* (1934), Benedict brought forth the arguments for what would become known as cultural relativism. Just a few years later, she introduced a second major public concept, when she coined the word "racism" in *Race:*

*Science and Politics* (1939). Published in the same year that Hitler invaded Poland and began the systematic destruction of Europe's Jews and their culture, Benedict's book was highly relevant to its times.

Somewhat belatedly, the Office of War Information acknowledged her abilities in 1943 and employed Benedict for advice on dealing with enemy peoples. This experience, combined with earlier research, led to *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* (1946), a best selling study of Japanese culture that was published during the first year of American occupation of Japan. Few Americans knew much about its values, and the book had appreciable impact in peacefully moving Japan from its militaristic, highly authoritarian past to a peaceful and democratic future.

Her Columbia colleagues never gave Benedict the rank that she was due: after a quarter-century there, she finally was promoted from associate to full professor just months before her sudden death at age sixty-one. At the time, she had just begun a huge study of contemporary European and Asian cultures for the Office of Naval Research. Her former student, Margaret Mead—who endured similar academic discrimination—honored Benedict with the publication of two books about this important and original thinker.

*See also:* **best sellers; Office of War Information; European Theater of Operations; occupied Japan; refugees; Pacific Theater of Operations**

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## BENEFITS, MILITARY

The topic of military benefits is complex because they varied not only by service (Army, Navy, Marines, etc.), but also by time periods, as the War Department and Congress made continual changes. In general, however, it was axiomatic that a woman who enlisted in the military could not expect the financial benefits that were established for men.

If she was married, her husband would not receive the monthly allotment that went to the wives of enlisted men. The same was true for parents or others who might have been dependent upon her income before she enlisted.

Insurance that was routinely offered to male soldiers was not offered to female soldiers, and the same was true for death benefits. In several cases of plane crashes that killed members of the WASP (Women's Airforce Service Pilots),

for example, friends of the dead woman literally had to collect donations to ship her body home. When the WASP was abruptly disbanded late in 1944, some women were stranded without bus fare, meal allowances, or other benefits routinely granted to men.

Other irrationalities existed between the services. While WASPs got the fewest benefits, members of the Women's Army Corps (WAC) were poorly paid compared with the Navy's WAVES; the latter averaged \$50 per month, compared with the base pay of \$21 for WACs. What was added to "base pay" only expanded of the crazy quilt of military regulations where there often seemed to be more exceptions than rules.

In theory, women in the three naval branches—WAVES, SPARS, and Women Marines—held equal status with men, but, in fact, WAVES commander Mildred McAfee wrote in 1943 that they were "not entitled to receive ... death gratuity, retirement pay, or pensions." Members of both the Army Nurse Corps and the Navy Nurse Corps, she added "do have servicemen's benefits."

Veterans benefits, too, were problematic. Although women may have been entitled to more benefits than they applied for, few seemed to understand that they could use the GI Bill of Rights for college tuition and home mortgages. Likewise, very few women availed themselves of the medical facilities operated by the Veterans Administration.

The problem continued for decades, as even the 1948 Women's Armed Services Integration Act, which began to integrate women into the military, did not eliminate all of the gender-based discrimination in rank and promotion, and therefore, benefits.

**See also: allotments; Army Nurse Corps; GI Bill of Rights; McAfee, Mildred; males, comparisons with; Navy Nurse Corps; pay; rank; SPARS; veterans; wives of servicemen; Marines; WASP; WAVES; Women's Armed Services Integration Act; Women's Army Corps**

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## BEST SELLERS/BOOKS BY WOMEN

The years just before U.S. entrance into war featured some of the century's most successful books by female authors. Georgia's Margaret Mitchell published her all-time best

seller, *Gone With the Wind* (1937), and Florida's Marjorie Kinnon Rawlings won the Pulitzer Prize for *The Yearling* (1939). Katherine Ann Porter issued the first of her successful fiction with *Pale Horse, Pale Rider* (1939).

The top 1940 nonfiction book was Osa Leighty Johnson's *I Married Adventure*, which told of her life in Africa with her husband, Martin Johnson; she followed up with a second book on that topic the next year. Virginia's accomplished Ellen Glasgow wound down her career with *In This Our Life* (1941), which won the Pulitzer Prize in Letters; she would die in 1945. Except for Edna Ferber, other 1941 female novelists have been largely forgotten, but they wrote four of the top ten sellers. Female novelists did slightly better in 1942, writing five of the top ten sellers, but the only author who proved to be permanently well known was Pearl Buck.

The years 1941 and 1942 were even better for women in terms of literary awards. For the first time since the prize began in 1917, a woman won the 1941 Pulitzer Prize for biography: Ola Elizabeth Winslow, a professor at Massachusetts' all-female Wellesley College, was honored for her work on 18th-century evangelist Jonathan Edwards. The following year, a male biographer, Forrest Wilson, won that prize for *Crusader in Caroline* (1942), about Civil War figure Harriet Beecher Stowe, and this was the first time ever that the prize was awarded to a biography about a woman.

Although it was not a best seller *Return to the Future* (1942) was a notable book that had some influence with Scandinavian Americans. In 1928, its author, Sigrid Undset, had been the third woman to win the Nobel Prize in literature. When Germany conquered Norway early in 1940, Undset escaped to the east, going first to neutral Sweden and then on to the United States via Russia and Japan (before Japan declared war on the United States). The book was the story of this far northern saga. Undset returned to Norway with the 1945 end of the war.

The years 1942 and 1943 marked the first time ever that women won the Pulitzer Prize for history in two consecutive years. Margaret Leech won for her book about the nation's capital during the Civil War, *Reveille in Washington* (1942), and Esther Forbes followed with *Paul Revere and the World He Lived In* (1943). Also midway through the war, Betty Smith published her classic *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* (1943), while historian Cornelia Otis Skinner joined her friend Emily Kimbrough to write a bestseller, *Our Hearts Were Young and Gay* (1943).

Kimbrough followed up with another nostalgic book the next year: *How Dear to My Heart* (1944), a humorous look at her small town, Midwestern childhood, illustrated by famed cartoonist Helen Hokinson. On a far different note, Lillian Smith, a white Georgian, was threatened by arsonists after she courageously published a novel on interracial love; *Strange Fruit* (1944). It not only topped best seller lists, but also was a catalyst for the era's anti-lynching movement. The book was banned in some cities, as was Kathleen Winsor's *Forever Amber* (1944); although set in 17th century England, Winsor's book was controversial because of its sexuality.



Strangely enough, Philadelphian Catherine Drinker Bowen's first biography, *Yankee from Olympus: Justice Holmes and His Family* (1944) also was briefly banned from distribution to soldiers because of its alleged political bias, and the controversy doubtless helped make it a best seller. A second nonfiction bestseller that year had a much longer impact on American cultural life, as Margaret Landon's *Anna and the King of Siam* (1944) became the basis of a stage and movie success in the 1950s, *The King and I*.

The 1945 Pulitzer Prize for drama went to Mary Chase for her delightful comedy about an invisible rabbit, *Harvey*. In a similar vein, humorist Juliet Lowell placed second on that year's nonfiction best seller list with her look at military bureaucracy, *Dear Sir* (1945). She followed only famed war correspondent Ernie Pyle, with his contrastingly serious *Brave Men* (1945).

In 1946, the first full year of peace, women held the top three bestseller positions. Betty Bard MacDonald's account of farm life, *The Egg and I* (1945), was the top in nonfiction. This remarkable book had a long shelf life, also placing in the top ten during 1945 and 1947. In fiction, Daphne du Maurier was first with *The King's General* (1946), and Taylor Caldwell followed with *This Side of Innocence* (1946). The year also brought a first novel by Mississippi's Eudora Welty, *Delta Wedding* (1946).

Finally, the war years provided opportunity to women in some unconventional areas. Cartoonist Marjorie Henderson Buell signed herself simply "Marge" when she began publishing "Little Lulu" in 1945: an adventurous girl often seen skipping school, "Lulu" had a long run in national syndication. Cartoonist Helen Hokinson helped make a success of the *New Yorker*. More seriously, although her work was little noted at the time, Florida's Zora Neale Hurston since has been recognized as a great African-American and feminist novelist; her *Dust Tracks on the Road* (1942) was written early in the war. The University of Minnesota published Alice Tyler's *Freedom's Ferment* (1945), which also had a long shelf life and set new standards for social history.

Some important wartime books were published by Blanche Knopf, who made a point of helping literary refugees from Europe. Books by First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt also were popular before, during, and after the war. Many books, too, were promoted by other women in the communication business, including publishers such as Freda Kirchwey and Cissy Patterson, as well as other writers, especially feminist Dorothy Thompson. Pearl Buck's ever-popular novels helped explicate Asia to wartime Americans, as did the non-fiction of Ruth Benedict.

In contrast to the war years, the postwar period was devastating to female writers. From 1947 to 1961, no women reached the top of either fiction or nonfiction lists or won Pulitzers. Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1961) finally reversed the literary prize trend, and Katherine Anne Porter's *Ship of Fools* (1962) was that year's best seller—but the remainder of the century brought many fewer milestones for literary women than they had enjoyed in its first half. Poetry,

which stereotypically is associated with women, presaged the negative trend: no women won the Pulitzer Prize for poetry between 1938 and 1950.

*See also:* **artists; Benedict, Ruth; Buck, Pearl; correspondents, war; drama; Hokinson, Helen; Kirchwey, Freda; Knopf, Blanche; magazines; movies; music; Office of War Information; refugees; Roosevelt, Eleanor; Thompson, Dorothy**

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## BETHUNE, MARY JANE MCLEOD (1875–1955)

Mary McLeod Bethune has a strong claim to being considered the first advocate for African-American women in the military. She also was the only woman of color in the world who was present at the founding of the United Nations.

A longtime Floridian, she was born in Sumter County, South Carolina, where she was the last of seventeen children. Her parents had been slaves until a decade before her birth, and they were impoverished sharecroppers then. South Carolina offered virtually no public education, and when Mary finished the curriculum at a mission school run by Presbyterians from the North, she had no choice but farm work.

She was toiling in a cotton field in 1887, when a missionary came with the news that a Quaker teacher in Colorado, Mary Chrissman, promised "to give an education to a colored girl." This financial and emotional support lasted many years, although the two did not meet until 1930.

At age twelve, Mary had never seen a train before, but she took one to North Carolina's Scotia Seminary, where she benefited from an uncommon integrated faculty. She graduated in 1894 and earned a scholarship to Chicago's famed Moody Bible Institute. After finishing her work there, she was crushed to discover that no church would sponsor a black woman as a missionary to Africa.

Instead she taught at a series of schools in South Carolina and Georgia before she married Albertus Bethune in May, 1898; their only child was born the following February. They lived in Palatka, Florida, a wooded area of northeast Florida where black men worked at tapping trees for their resins—but even in this isolated place, she taught at a Presbyterian school and also sold policies for the new Afro-American Life Insur-





Mary McLeod Bethune with Eleanor Roosevelt at the opening of a residence hall for African-American women in overcrowded Washington. *Courtesy of National Archives*

ance Company. Although they never divorced, the marriage quickly deteriorated, and at age twenty-nine, Bethune took her young son and moved to the town that she would help develop, Daytona Beach.

Despite many hardships, she began building the institution that today is Bethune-Cookman College. Her students, all young African-American girls, moved thousands of pounds of trash from an old dump, and by 1941—when the United States entered the war—she could write: “We have fourteen modern buildings, a beautiful campus of thirty-two acres ... entirely unencumbered” by debt. Achieving that with literally no resources took true executive ability, and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt was among those who noticed.

President Franklin Roosevelt appointed Bethune to the National Youth Administration in (NYA) 1935, the first time that a high-level federal post went to a black woman. She traveled the country promoting the NYA’s job-training programs and introducing the concept of equal employment opportunity—not only for blacks, but also for Hispanics and Native Americans. The NYA was disbanded in 1943, when the need for it lessened with the end of the Great Depression, and then Bethune switched her energy to the Advisory Committee of the new Women’s Army Corps (WAC).

With support from WAC Director Oveta Culp Hobby, Bethune led the way in writing WAC regulations so that minorities not only were allowed to join, but also that they were assigned work that utilized their skills. This confounded much of the public, who assumed that black WACs would do little beyond kitchen or laundry duty. Bethune also encouraged young role models such as future Colonel Charity Adams, and she played a major role in bringing the corps’ second training facility to Daytona Beach. When black WACs were assigned to the European Theater Operations, Bethune toured those installations in 1944, observing their work and arguing for fuller integration—something that the Marines, Coast Guard and Navy were slow to do.

Somehow she also found time to write on issues important to minorities, including frequent columns for the *Chicago Defender* and the *Pittsburgh Courier*, both of which had national audiences. She especially used her position as the founding president of the National Council of Negro Women to work for wartime employment opportunity in defense industries, expansion of child care facilities, improved housing, and other changes that would help bring African Americans into America’s mainstream.

Bethune attended the founding conference of the United Nations, which was held in San Francisco in the late spring of 1945, when the European war essentially was over, but victory was not yet complete in the Pacific Theater Operations. At age seventy, Mary McLeod Bethune was the only black, female official there. No woman represented any African nation—but in 1952, during President Harry Truman’s last year in office, she went to Liberia as a government emissary.

In the same year, Bethune became president of the Tampa-based Central Life Insurance Company; she may have been the world’s only woman with that title. During all of this activity, she also was active in many organizations, including Planned Parenthood and the NAACP. Mary McLeod Bethune died at eighty-four and is buried on the Bethune-Cookman College campus.

**See also:** Adams, Charity; African-American women; child care; Daytona Beach; defense industries; European Theater of Operations; Hobby, Oveta Culp; housing; National Youth Administration; Pacific Theater of Operations; Roosevelt, Eleanor; United Nations; Women’s Army Corps

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## BIRTH CONTROL/BIRTH RATE

Although birth control remained largely a taboo topic until the 1960 introduction of “the pill,” it is clear that birth rates took an unprecedented and never-repeated dip during the Great Depression of the 1930s. The decades before and after the 1930s had population increases of around 15 percent, but during those hungry years, the figure dropped by half. Some of this decrease may be attributed to emigration, as more people left the United States than entered, but most of it was a simple refusal by women to add another baby to families that already could not manage their needs.

When the economy improved in the 1940s, older couples rushed to have the babies that they could not afford earlier—but the war also meant that millions of men and women in their early child-bearing years were separated, often by thousands of miles and several years. During the first half of the 1940s, millions of young American men literally lived for months on end without meeting a single dateable woman.

Birth rates therefore did not begin to soar until after the war's 1945 end. The postwar “baby boom,” in fact, really took off in next decade, when many couples added a fourth, fifth, or sixth child during the 1950s. Census records for those decades are:

Decade Ending In:	U.S. Population	Percent Increase over the previous decade
1930	123,202,624	16.2
1940	132,164,569	7.3
1950	151,325,798	14.5
1960	179,323,175	18.5

During the World War I era (1913–18), Margaret Sanger began her long battle with state and national officials for the right to speak about sex education and to run clinics where women could obtain contraceptive needs. She, Mary Ware Dennett, and others continued to be harassed during the 1920s by laws that forbade the mailing of material on this subject—but the dramatic drop in population during the 1930s made it clear that their message was getting through to the public, if not to the politicians.

By 1940 and the onset of World War II, most men and many women were familiar with condoms, diaphragms, and other methods of pregnancy prevention. This may have been the area, however, in which double standards were strongest: while men understood contraception, especially condoms,

“nice girls” were supposed to be unaware of birth control, and certainly unwilling to practice it.

The military offered almost no guidance to its female recruits on matters of sex education. The Surgeon General's Office developed a curriculum for the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC) that was somewhat similar to that designed for male recruits, but “after rewriting by Director [Oveta Culp] Hobby's office,” said army historian Mattie Treadwell, it “sounded more like a moral than a medical discourse.” Birth control was dismissed with the comment that it was “neither effective nor practicable.”

In contrast, sociologist Eugene Burgess, who wrote a year earlier, when the WAAC was only barely underway, said that policy for male soldiers was “compulsory use of prophylaxis.” Men, it was assumed, would visit prostitutes, and the military insisted on condoms because it did not want its soldiers disabled by venereal disease.

The leaders of the other women's military units emulated the WAAC, promoting puritanical attitudes on contraception and every other aspect of sexuality. Despite their attempt at pristine images, however, some conservatives who opposed the entire idea of women in the military spread rumors that WAACs practiced birth control. One of the most vehement of these critics, *New York Daily News* columnist John O'Donnell, said in 1943 that prophylactic equipment was to become Government Issue for WAACs—but most of his media colleagues quickly rebuked him.

Calling this “pompostorous,” *Time* did not speak so much to the issue of birth control, but instead to exploitation of the issue for political purposes. “Many an honest U.S. newspaperman was outraged” by this attack on WAAC morality, *Time* editorialized, concluding that O'Donnell's “hatred for Franklin Roosevelt and all this works sometimes leads him to flout the standards of his own profession.”

The damage to recruitment that such slander caused was viewed seriously enough that military intelligence spent much time tracking down the rumormongers—thus making it clear that in most minds, any woman who practiced birth control was likely to be immoral. At the same time, of course, male leadership of both the military and defense industries wanted their female employees to remain pregnancy-free.

While the debate on birth control in the military was loud, little was said on the subject in regard to civilian women in defense industries—who were, of course, not only much more numerous, but also more likely to be in contact with men. Worse, most of the little that was written was aimed at male executives, not at the women who read women's magazines.

*Business Week* probably was the most candid about writing on pregnant employees, which it viewed solely as a problem of costs when another woman had to be trained as a replacement for a pregnant woman. In an era when maternity leave was almost unheard of, the possibility that a new mother might want to return to work seemed not to occur to these personnel “experts.” They offered no suggestions for solving the problem and did not even hint at the possibility of

pregnancy prevention—although a 1943 article parenthetically acknowledged that “one of the most common causes of abortion is a woman’s fear of losing her job.”

*Harper’s* took the issue further, and in a display of candor rarely seen in World War II media, it attempted to introduce a mid-course between uncontrolled pregnancies and abortion. That the concept of birth control was still new, even to its highly-literate audience, is clear:

Perhaps the problem would be solved more easily if every pregnant woman wanted her baby, but more don’t than do. Unmarried women obviously don’t and many a married woman wants to continue at work without the burden of another child. Their way out of their predicament is dangerous ...

Some deliberately strain themselves by lifting heavy objects while on the job ... More go to abortionists. The result is that abortion rings are doing a land-office business....

Counselors cannot and do not want to exclude unmarried women from the benefits of child spacing, which is the accepted term for birth control ... The need for this information has finally brought the former Birth Control League into a position of prominence. Now called Planned Parenthood, it serves an increasingly important role in industry.

The last phrase—that birth control was a service to industry—has unintended impact. A public unwilling to accept the idea that women should have the freedom to control their own bodies instead might be willing to accept birth control as a wartime industrial need. When the war was over, the assumption was that women would turn from war production to the production of multiple children. That would not change until the birth control pill went on the market in 1960, and the decade that followed would be the most culturally revolutionary in the nation’s history.

*See also:* **Hobby, Oveta Culp; defense industries; magazines; marriage; pregnancy; prostitution; “slander campaign;” venereal disease; Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps**

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## BLANCHFIELD, FLORENCE ABY (1882–1971)

Commander of the Army Nurse Corps (ANC) during the second half of World War II, Florence Blanchfield also was

the first woman sworn into the “regular army” when the nation returned to a peacetime military.

Born in the Shenandoah Valley of the Appalachians, she obscured the exact date and place—presumably to allow an older sister to appear younger than she was, so that both women could fall under the Army Nurse Corps’ maximum age requirement when they enlisted during World War I. Florence Blanchfield consistently listed her birthplace as Shepherdstown, West Virginia, and the year as 1884, although state records show that she actually was born in Warren County, Virginia in 1882.

After finishing school and nursing a terminally ill brother, Blanchfield moved to Pittsburgh, where her mother’s family lived, and enrolled in South Side Hospital Training School for Nurses. She graduated in 1906 and did postgraduate work at several institutions, including a year at prestigious Johns Hopkins Medical School, which had been endowed by Baltimore feminist Mary Garrett and thus offered extraordinary opportunity to women.

Blanchfield held supervisory positions at several Pennsylvania hospitals, and in 1913, was a federal employee at Ancon Hospital in Panama during the construction of the Panama Canal. The first world war began in Europe that year, and when the United States entered in 1917, Blanchfield enlisted in the Army Nurse Corps (ANC).

The ANC had begun in 1901, after the 1898 Spanish-American War demonstrated the need for it. All nurses were axiomatically female in the public mind of that time, and the Navy Nurse Corps, which followed in 1908, also was all-female. World War I, then called “the Great War,” was the first war for both corps.

Lieutenant Blanchfield worked briefly at Ellis Island before going on to three hospitals in France; she served there until 1919, after the war ended. Because of postwar downsizing, she returned to Pittsburgh briefly, but reenlisted as soon as possible in 1920. That meant a decision not to marry: during most of her career, the army required that its nurses remain single. For the next two decades, she moved through more than a dozen assignments, serving at army posts in eight states, the Philippines, and China. She went to Washington in 1935, where she was assigned to the Office of the Superintendent of the ANC, which was within the Surgeon General’s Office.

In 1939, after more than two decades of service, she finally was promoted to the “relative rank” of captain—“relative rank” being a term that both the Army and Navy used for their Nurse Corps, a mechanism that held women to lower rank and especially benefits. That year war returned to Europe, and from then until June 1943, Blanchfield served as chief assistant to ANC chief Colonel Julia Flikke. She was, in effect, second in command of the entire ANC, and yet was merely a captain—the rank just above the lowest, lieutenant. Moreover, because Flikke was increasingly ill, much of her responsibility fell upon Blanchfield even before Flikke’s resignation in May 1943. Blanchfield assumed command the next month and



therefore had to be promoted to colonel, skipping the rank of major altogether.

She headed a Nurse Corps of almost sixty thousand women, virtually all of whom were new to the military. In 1940, the last full year of peace, the ANC had numbered a mere seven hundred—but by April 1941, nearly that many joined every month. After December's Pearl Harbor attack, the growth was exponential, and when Blanchfield took over in mid-1943, she commanded women literally around the world. ANC women worked from Alaska to Australia, from Iran to Ireland, and hundreds of points between. Blanchfield's rank and responsibilities were unparalleled: any man with such a command would be a general.

The most important decision that Colonel Blanchfield made was to put nurses near the front lines of battle. When told that nurses on Bataan tore up underwear for bandages, her response was that nurses thrived on emergencies and should expect to be innovative. Her approach back at Washington, however, was not as innovative as it might have been. Although she took a number of inspection tours overseas, most of her time was spent in Washington sorting out bureaucratic problems.

The biggest was recruitment and retention, and especially the military regulations that insisted on discharging experienced nurses who wanted to marry. Unlike the women of the WAAC, WAVES, and other new branches (and unlike men of any service), marriage meant an automatic discharge for ANC members. Blanchfield probably expended more effort on this than on any other issue.

Her work was further complicated by traditional requirements for cooperation with the Red Cross, the American Nurse Association, and other civilian bodies that were not subject to her command. She also expended much effort on working with nursing schools: women were required to be registered nurses (RNs) prior to joining the ANC.

The special needs of the military mandated further training for RNs, and among Blanchfield's biggest accomplishments was the establishment of basic training schools in the nine continental service commands and in all overseas theaters. Nurses learned survival techniques appropriate to their assignments: those bound for North Africa, for example, trained in Arizona deserts, where they learned to crawl on sand under barbed wire while live ammunition flew over them.

Blanchfield also made uniforms more practicable; she implemented combat-line surgical teams and began programs in psychiatric nursing. Air evacuation, or flight nursing, also was new under her command. She launched publication of *The Army Nurse*, a monthly magazine that linked her far-flung women, and inaugurated a publicity program to acquaint the public with the heroic achievements of wartime nurses. She soon developed a deserved reputation for great energy, diplomatic skill, and superb executive ability.

These characteristics served her well when Congress almost drafted women with the Nurses Selective Service Act of 1945. She privately opposed the move, believing that a draft was not necessary. President Franklin Roosevelt, however,

proposed the idea in his State of the Union speech, and the Surgeon General—Blanchfield's boss—testified in favor of drafting women with nursing credentials. With Secretary War Henry Stimson also supporting the bill, it passed the House in March and was reported favorably by the Senate Military Affairs Committee in April. With victory in Europe in early May, however, the Senate did not act. Blanchfield's prediction that a draft was not needed proved correct.

On June 14, 1945, she was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal for "exceptional ... executive ability [that] contributed materially to the brilliant record achieved by the Army Nurse Corps during the war." After demobilization of tens of thousands of nurses, her highest priority became integration of the ANC into the regular army. With her close congressional ally, Representative Frances Bolton, Blanchfield worked for an end to relative rank, with equitable pay and benefits for nurses.

The Army-Navy Nurse Act passed on July 18, 1947, and the next day, General Dwight D. Eisenhower swore in Florence Blanchfield as the first woman in the regular army. She was honored with the service number of "N1"—but was demoted from full colonel to lieutenant colonel. A congressional bill later rectified this injustice, awarding her retroactive compensation. Her replacement as head of the ANC was Mary G. Phillips, who, according to ANC historian Edith Aynes, "was upset over the assignment, for she disliked Washington duty, but the choice of a successor to Colonel Blanchfield had been put to a vote of the Regular Army nurses—and Colonel Phillips was the result." Although now part of the "regular" army, this vote to elect the ANC chief was highly unusual, a demonstration of democracy among women that never occurred with modern military men.

Florence Blanchfield was a paragon of executive ability, but she can be faulted for excessive modesty that limited her value as a role model: she praised her nurses, but the secondary place that she accepted for herself acted to keep her women from greater assertion and prevented them from getting promotions and honors they deserved. Edith Aynes, then an assistant to Blanchfield, wrote of 1944, when:

Army nurses around the world were wondering why the newly organized Women's Army Corps ... could rate rapid promotions but nurses in overseas hospitals, even some of those on the Anzio beachhead [where nurses were killed], were still second lieutenants after two or three years in the service. One nurse with three years and four months service wrote to me as editor of *The Army Nurse* that her family could not understand why she had not been promoted. Hers was the problem of so many nurses around the world that I went to Colonel Blanchfield for the answer.

The "answer" boiled down to the traditional secondary place that nurses long had accepted. Aynes got a lesson in ANC history, not the political action promise that nurses had a right to expect—and which Congress surely would have granted had Blanchfield dared to lobby for changes in regulations. Excessive modesty also caused her to insist that records hide the real reason for discharge in cases of nurses



who left because of pregnancy. Because she saw the ideal nurse as nun-like in her dedication to patients, she also failed to push for rational changes that would have allowed nurses to marry. She might be faulted, too, with excessive protection of bureaucratic turf: she not only was less than supportive of the new non-nursing corps, but more surprisingly, her records reveal almost no cooperation with the Navy Nurse Corps. She was much more likely to work with civilian nursing groups than with other branches of the military.

Finally, Blanchfield must bear some of the criticism for the ANC's slow rate of racial integration. While the WAAC made a point of including black women from the beginning, the ANC did not accept significant numbers until pressured to do so by civil rights organizations and Congress. Even then, black nurses were not actively recruited; when demobilization began in July 1945, there were just 512 black nurses in the ANC, less than 1 percent of the total.

After almost thirty years of service, Blanchfield retired in September 1947. She continued to devote herself to the ANC by writing two lengthy histories of it, *The Army Nurse Corps in World War II* (1948) and *Organized Nursing and the Army in Three Wars* (1950). With her characteristic modesty, however, she did not insist that the government print them, as was routinely done for military units much smaller than the ANC. She left only typewritten manuscripts, with two carbon copies, and illustrations that consist of pasted-in snapshots. Her unpublished records may be found in archives at the University of Texas and Boston University, as well as in various federal archives.

Florence Blanchfield died in Washington, DC—on May 12, the birth date of her heroine, Florence Nightingale, and the International Red Cross had awarded her their highest honor, the Florence Nightingale Medal. Colonel Blanchfield was buried in the Nurses Section of Arlington National Cemetery.

**See also:** African-American women; American Nurse Association; Army Nurse Corps; Bolton, Rep. Frances; decorations, military; flight nurses; Flikke, Julia O.; hospitals; marriage; medals; Navy Nurse Corps; nurses; Nurses Selective Service Act; Pearl Harbor; pay; pregnancy; rank; recruitment; Red Cross; WAVES; Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC)

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## BLUE STAR MOTHERS OF AMERICA

Hundreds of thousands of American homes featured blue stars in their front windows during World War II, which indicated that someone in the household was serving in the military. Multiple stars represented multiple family members, and if someone was killed, the blue star was replaced with gold.

The idea for an organization of mothers with children in the military began with a suggestion in a Flint, Michigan, newspaper in January 1942, soon after the attack on Hawaii's Pearl Harbor and American entrance into the war. More than one thousand people responded, and the organization grew quickly throughout the Midwest and then the nation. They chose a blue star as their logo because that was briefly used in World War I.

Organizational membership reached a high of thirty thousand in World War II, but many more mothers simply displayed blue stars without joining the organization. Like other groups, Blue Star Mothers volunteered in military hospitals, wrote letters and sent goody packages to soldiers, worked in civil defense, and did whatever they could to ease life for soldiers and their families. The organization continued during the Korean War of the 1950s, and Congress formally chartered it in 1960.

The unpopular Vietnam War of the 1960s and 1970s, however, caused it to fade into obscurity. Currently based in Colonial Beach, Virginia, the Blue Star Mothers of America has some fifteen hundred members, many of whom continue to volunteer their time in supporting soldiers.

**See also:** civil defense; Gold Star Mothers; hospitals; Pearl Harbor; letter writing; volunteers

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## BOLTON ACT

This act, unanimously passed by Congress in May 1943, not only set a precedent for federal aid to education, but also and especially offered young women a historic opportunity to pursue careers.

Nurses were axiomatically assumed to be female in this era, and even before the United States entered World War II, there were not enough of them. The shortage existed in part because Americans became accustomed to higher standards of health during the last years of the Great Depression, as New Deal programs educated people in public health issues. When the economy boomed with impending war in Europe during the late 1930s, Americans began entering hospitals for attention to ills that they would have ignored in an earlier era.

Already in 1941, months before Pearl Harbor, the U.S. Public Health Service reported some ten thousand vacancies

for hospital nurses—not including the many non-hospital positions that nurses fill. Some hospitals closed wings because they had no nurses to work in them, and doctors began to urge pregnant patients to have their babies at home rather than in overcrowded, understaffed hospitals.

The Public Health Service wanted 55,000 new nursing students in 1942; the next year, the recruitment quota was raised to 65,000. The National Nursing Council for War Service worked with women's magazines to find and retrain the 100,000 women who had graduated from nursing schools in the past, but were not currently working. The Red Cross, the Office of Civilian Defense, and other agencies pleaded for another 100,000 volunteers to become nurses' aides at their local hospitals, but despite all this, a major shortage remained in 1944. The nation needed 66,000 military nurses that year and almost 300,000 for civilian duty—100,000 more than were available.

Retention was almost as big a problem as recruitment: many traditionally underpaid nurses found that they could earn more and have less responsibility if they gave up their profession to work in defense industries. Recruitment of new nurses also was hampered by that, and especially by the fact that the military required nurses to pay for their own educations prior to enlistment. Although the armed forces trained millions of young men at taxpayer expense, a young woman who wanted to join the Nurse Corps of either the U.S. Army or U.S. Navy had to first earn her nursing degree at her own cost.

Representative Frances Bolton of Ohio worked hard to bring both justice and common sense to this situation. She pushed for a program that would train at government expense students who agreed to serve in some type of necessary nursing for the duration of the war plus six months. Congress had already acknowledged the need in its 1941–42 budget, which appropriated some \$5 million to nursing schools via the Public Health Service—but that aid went to schools, not to individual women. Bolton's bill was historic in its intent to grant some of the money directly to students.

The bill also provided for a Cadet Nurse Corps, complete with a uniform, which was intended to give student nurses a sense that they were part of the war effort. Another section of the act encouraged early entrance into service by providing incentives to nursing schools for accelerated courses, and it tried to attract older nurses by providing funds for refresher courses and postgraduate work.

Not a single member of Congress objected to Bolton's ideas, and the bill passed both houses with only minimal discussion. President Franklin Roosevelt happily signed it, although he was a Democrat and Bolton a Republican. Eleanor Roosevelt and Frances Bolton had been young wives of Washington politicians during World War I, and both had volunteered during a nursing shortage then.

Authorized by the Bolton Act, state departments of education created publicity programs that encouraged young women to take advantage of the legislation, and the number of nursing-school students indeed soared. Ultimately, the act was directly responsible for the training of more than

120,000 wartime nurses. The need was so great, however, that a shortage remained throughout the war, and in 1945, Congress nearly passed the Nurses Selective Service Act that would have drafted nurses.

Administrators of the Bolton Act had to struggle against old attitudes that promoted an image of nursing as a sort of secondary career. Indeed, the strongest point that many high-school counselors and nursing-school recruiters made was that nursing was good training for being a wife and mother. Even *Independent Woman*, the national publication of Business & Professional Women, stressed as a positive that "the marriage rate is higher among nurses than among women of any other profession." Government publicity also furthered the ghetto-like status of the profession by pointing out that nursing was one of the few occupations in which women would not be expected to give up their jobs to returning soldiers at the war's end.

Despite these negatives, the Bolton Act set an important precedent for federal aid that went directly to female students. It represented a national milestone in granting economic opportunity to tens of thousands of young women.

**See also:** Army Nurse Corps; Bolton, Frances; Business & Professional Women; Cadet Nurse Corps; hospitals; Navy Nurse Corps; nurses; Nurses Selective Service Act; civil defense; pay; Pearl Harbor; pregnancy; Red Cross; Roosevelt, Eleanor; volunteers; uniforms

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## **BOLTON, FRANCES PAYNE BINGHAM (1885–1977)**

U.S. Representative Frances P. Bolton of Ohio was a major leader in Congress during World War II, especially on behalf of nurses. Her Bolton Act set an important precedent for female education and careerism.

She was born wealthy, with a fortune from Standard Oil; her maternal grandfather also was a U.S. senator. Educated by governesses and in finishing schools, she studied in France and New York City prior to marrying Chester Castle Bolton in 1907. They had four children, one of whom died, and lived in both Ohio and Washington, D.C., while her husband, a Republican attorney, furthered his political career.

Frances Bolton gained important insight into the nursing profession when she volunteered in Washington hospitals during World War I. She helped persuade Secretary of War N. D. Baker to establish the Army School of Nursing—and then saw it disappear with the war's end. Nursing education thereafter was a high priority for her Payne Foundation. In 1929, she gave a million dollars to establish a nursing school at Ohio's Western Reserve University, and she continued to endow other such institutions—including the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses—for the rest of her life.

When her husband died in 1938, Frances Bolton easily won election to his seat in the U.S. House; at age fifty-four, she was Ohio's first congresswoman. She represented an affluent Cleveland Heights district, and the news media often referred to her as the richest member of Congress. She nonetheless devoted her career to the less fortunate—and won reelection in 1940 by a larger margin than her husband ever had. Even as she voted more and more with the liberal Democrats, her wealthy constituents continued to re-elect her every two years.

Although most of her fellow Republicans were isolationist in this era, Bolton became an internationalist after she was appointed to the powerful House Foreign Affairs Committee in 1941. She supported Democratic President Franklin Roosevelt not only on foreign policy, but also on many controversial domestic issues. After his death, she would continue to support such legislation as Democratic President Harry Truman's 1949 bill for low-income housing and the equal pay legislation that finally passed in 1963, under Democratic President John Kennedy.

The Bolton Act that paid for nursing education, which passed unanimously in 1943, was her most important achievement, but she also sponsored legislation on behalf of dietitians, physical and speech therapists, and other War Department employees whose secondary status was likely to be gender-based. She worked to create the new military occupation of "flight nursing," and in 1968, the Air Force would make her an honorary flight nurse. She accepted greater con-

troversy when she also pressured reluctant War Department officials to utilize the skills of African Americans.

When nurses were part of the 1944 D-Day invasion of Europe, Bolton paid her own way to check on their conditions. She risked being in London when German rockets rained and rode a tank into Paris two days after its liberation; in 1956, the French government would award her its Legion of Honor. She returned home to praise the women who worked "in grim tents," telling her congressional colleagues during debate on drafting nurses that she saw "miracles performed."

Her most troublesome wartime issue was, in fact, the debate on drafting women with the Nurses Selective Service Act of 1945. Florence Blanchfield, the head of the Army Nurse Corps, wanted her friend Frances Bolton to oppose this unprecedented draft, but Bolton refused to speak against it. Her peers recognized her as Congress' best-informed member on nursing issues, and because she did not object, the bill passed.

In 1949, when World War II was over but the Korean War was heating up, Bolton shocked even feminists by proposing a genderless draft. With apparent indifference to the conservative views of its readers, she wrote an *American Magazine* article bluntly titled "Why Women Should Be Drafted." She also was a sponsor of the 1948 Women's Armed Service Integration Act, which made rank and pay for women more nearly equal to that of men.

After Republicans won a majority of seats in 1946, Bolton moved up to chair the House Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Near East and Africa. She was the first woman to lead a congressional delegation abroad and set other precedents, including a 1946 meeting with the king of Saudi Arabia, the first time that he received a female official. Bolton also chaired the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on National and International Movements, and its report, *The Strategy and Tactics of World Communism* (1948) defined military and diplomatic objectives during the post-Korea "Cold War."

The 1952 election set another precedent, as Frances Bolton and her son, Oliver Payne Bolton, became the first mother/son team in Congress. He won a Cleveland district adjacent to hers, but he did not prove to be nearly her political equal. While she told *Saturday Evening Post* that "we do not always see eye to eye, [but] ... I am happy in his independence," he crassly cautioned his mother to "stay the hell out of my district." Voters soon removed him from office.

Bolton also helped end the reign of her fellow Republican, ultra-conservative Representative Joseph McCarthy. She deliberately associated herself instead with Democratic women, especially one of McCarthy's victims, Representative Helen Gahagan Douglas. Bolton supported federal aid to education when opposition to that was a litmus test for conservatives, and the *Negro History Bulletin* praised her for drawing attention to needs in Africa. Indifferent to reporters who dubbed her "the African Queen," she paid for several trips there—not only for herself, but also for expert advisers. In addition, she served as a trustee for Alabama's Tuskegee Institute and the Museum of African-American Art.



She set still another precedent when President Dwight Eisenhower appointed Bolton as the first female congressional delegate to the young United Nations in 1953. With the 1960 death of Representative Edith Nourse Rogers, Bolton became "Dean of the Women of Congress," having served longer than any other woman. The senior Republican on the Foreign Affairs Committee by then, she participated in the 1961 conference that created the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).

After winning fifteen consecutive elections, Bolton faced both a new district and a changed nation in 1968. Given the tumult of the Vietnam War that year, it is not surprising that the eighty-three-year-old Republican lost to the Democratic congressman she was forced to run against in the redrawn district.

She retired to the Cleveland suburb of Lyndhurst and died there at age ninety-one. An early practitioner of yoga, Bolton routinely worked from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. and always was said to appear much younger than her age.

**See also:** African-American women; Army Nurse Corps; Blanchfield, Florence; Bolton Act; Douglas, Helen Gahagan; European Theater of Operations; flight nurses; hospitals; nurses; Nurses Selective Service Bill; Rogers, Edith Nourse; underutilization; Women's Armed Services Integration Act

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### BOND SALES

In addition to costing lives, World War II cost a staggering amount of money. Economic historian Claudia Goldin estimates that the war's total debt was close to a trillion dollars, or expressed another way, it was 188 percent of the era's annual gross national product (GNP). In com-

parison, the Vietnam War cost a mere 14 percent of that era's GNP.

To pay the literally millions of soldiers who fought and to buy the hundreds of millions of pieces of equipment that they needed, the U.S. Treasury Department had to borrow money from its citizens, and in World War II, that sort of financial arrangement was called selling "Defense Bonds" or more commonly, "War Bonds." A buyer could purchase, for instance, a \$10 bond or a \$100 bond and cash it in a decade later to recover the purchase price plus 2.9 percent interest.

Bonds thus were sold as a true investment in America—an investment that not only would help win the war, but also a savings plan for individuals that, unlike corporate bonds, was guaranteed by the U.S. Treasury. The economic strategy also was intended to hold down inflation by removing money from circulation, rather than permitting consumers—some of whom were earning the first good incomes of their lives—to drive up prices by competing for scarce goods. A final positive factor was that citizens would have billions in savings, which they could use for postponed purchases when the war ended. This would ensure continued production and prevent a repetition of the boom-and-bust cycle that followed World War I.

All of these economic planning points were especially helpful to women: unlike earlier wars, when widows and others with small incomes suffered from rising prices, in this war, the government expressly held down prices and encouraged savings. Instead of gambling their paychecks away, for example, soldiers were strongly advised to buy bonds that would help ensure their families' postwar future.

Because its own economists were unlikely candidates for pitching sales, however, the Treasury Department reached out to organizations, especially women's organizations, to help sell bonds. Whole towns closed down for rallies that often featured female speakers. Movie stars, singers, and other celebrities helped draw crowds, while orators made their appeals. Factories, too, shut down assembly lines while prominent speakers pleaded for money.

Most bond-drive participants were entertainers, some of whom benefited from the free publicity this gave to their careers, but others were ordinary people who had endured extraordinary wartime trials. Some of the nurses who escaped when the Japanese took Bataan, for instance, told of their horrific experience. Perhaps the most effective of such were the mother and daughter-in-law of Iowa's Sullivan family, which lost all five of its sons when the *USS Juneau* sank. The only daughter, Genevieve Sullivan, joined the Navy's WAVES and did bond sales drives as well as recruitment for the WAVES. The Marine Corps assigned identical twin sisters Irene and Madelene Spencer to bond sales duty; they worked New England with cowboy singer Gene Autry and other male celebrities.

Women's organizations sold huge numbers of bonds. The example was set by the American Women's Voluntary Services (AWVS): already in 1942, the war's first year, its New York City branch sold more than \$5 million dollars worth of bonds. Even women in the military were expected to spend





This chart of bond sales is typical of motivational methods to persuade citizens—both civilian and military—to lend money to the government by buying bonds. *Courtesy of Women in Military Service For America, Inc.*

part of the pay on war bonds, and most did so happily: not only did it help win the war, but also provided them with savings for the war's end, when most expected to transition back to civilian life.

Some of the most productive drives were based in defense factories, when management shut down so that everyone could go see a celebrity and hear the plea for purchases. That was made even more convenient by allowing workers to simply sign up for the Payroll Savings Plan, with the employer taking on the paperwork of buying bonds for the employee by making regular deductions from paychecks. Sometimes no celebrity was involved: African-American women who worked in a Philadelphia defense plant, for example, sang at noontime “glee club” appearances that also pitched for bond sales.

Magazines donated space for advertisements, many of them written by women and touchingly touting a happier future. One example was a woman with her young daughter, down on the floor pasting savings stamps into their booklet, while a picture of soldier smiled down on them. Posters, too, depicted the deeper meaning of buying bonds. One issued by the Treasury Department in 1943 showed a young woman, her little daughter, and a baby; it read: “I GAVE A MAN!

Will you give at least 10% of your pay in War Bonds?” At the top, it proclaimed, “This Isn’t Peace—IT’S WAR!!” and at the bottom, a final encouragement said, “SIGN UP FOR WAR BONDS. *Make your department 100%.*”

Some appealed to ethnic groups, especially those whose familial roots were in enemy countries. Without impugning the patriotism of Italian Americans, for example, one such poster depicted an Italian-appearing family in the small backyard of a city tenement, with a soldier coming up the sidewalk. “Hasten the Homecoming,” it said, “Buy Bonds.”

So successful was the bond-sales effort that polls soon showed 90 percent of Americans knew about Payroll Savings Plan. By the time that victory came, over 85 million Americans, or more than half of the population, had purchased war bonds. No other nation has ever matched that record.

*See also:* **advertising; allotments; American Women’s Voluntary Services; Bataan; defense industries; magazines; Office of War Information; rationing; Women Marines; Sullivan, Alleta; volunteers**

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#### BONNEY, MABEL THERESE (1897–1978)

War correspondent and photojournalist Therese Bonney had won France’s Legion of Honor a decade prior to the war. The French government awarded the prestigious medal to her in 1934 for her work in the arts, especially a cultural exchange between the United States and France and an exhibit she created that year to commemorate the death of Revolutionary War hero, the Marquis de LaFayette.

A native of Syracuse, New York, Bonney never used her first name of “Mabel.” After studying at the University of California, Harvard, and Columbia University, she earned her doctorate at the Sorbonne in Paris and settled there permanently in 1919. She overcame the hardships of the era’s economic depression to create an innovative business: putting her language skills to work, she developed a syndicate for news distribution. Soon the Bonney Service provided items from the American press to newspapers in more than thirty foreign countries.

The business, of course, gave her contacts that would be extremely valuable when World War II began. On what she called a “hunch,” Bonney went to Finland in 1939 just days before the Soviets attacked there. She hid in forests and snow banks while planes dropped bombs, and thereby created a photographic record that was unique. After World War II, the Finnish government would bestow its White Rose on her, an honor that was seldom granted to women.

The *Washington Post* published Bonney’s work on Finland in prime space, and the next year, she issued a photo essay, *War Comes to the People* (1940). She also shot pictures of refugees at the Franco-Belgian front when the Germans attacked there in May of 1940. She was the only correspondent in the rough terrain around the Meuse River, where the Belgian army effectively surrendered.

When Paris fell to the Nazis in June, Bonney returned to the United States to draw attention to the war with photo exhibits, including at the Library of Congress and in New York City’s Museum of Modern Art. Americans responded sympathetically to her depiction of helpless civilians who were living in daily terror under fascism throughout the European continent. The photos especially featured children, and Bonney titled the exhibit “To Whom the Wars Are Done.”

In 1941, before the United States entered the war, France’s government-in-exile again honored Bonney, this time with the *Croix de Guerre*. The presentation was in London, and she spent most of that year there, enduring not only the bombing blitz that devastated southern England, but also recording it in photographs. In 1942, she defied danger to return to Finland as an unprotected, or “lone wolf,” correspondent for *Collier’s*, then a popular news magazine.

A dozen publishers turned down Bonney when she wanted to issue an album titled *Europe’s Children, 1939–1943*. Determined to bring attention to these little ones whose lives had been destroyed for the past four years, she paid for its publication herself. The *New York Herald-Tribune*, which then was published by Helen Rogers Reid, called the photos “unforgettable,” adding that no one else had done work “so sharply moving, so overwhelmingly heartbreaking.” Not surprisingly, when Bonney’s privately-printed run quickly sold out, a commercial publisher took over the book.

By that year, Therese Bonney had crossed the Atlantic Ocean 104 times. Her attention to the effect of war on children was the basis for a postwar film, *The Search* (1948).

**See also:** **British women; correspondents, war; decorations; European Theater of Operations; French women; magazines**

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## BOOM TOWNS/POPULATION MOVEMENT

World War II caused by far the greatest movement in the world’s history. Most migrants overseas were forced from their homes as refugees, but within America, millions of people left their homes and moved somewhere else, many of them women. The population permanently shifted the from the North and East towards the South and West, and equally important, people left farms and villages for towns and cities, especially near the coasts. Most never returned to their earlier lifestyle.

In just a few years, families that had lived unmoved for generations pulled up their roots and went to where the defense-industry jobs were. From the mountains of West Virginia and Kentucky, they streamed into shipyards at places such as Hampton Roads, Virginia, and Wilmington, North Carolina. From impoverished places like Missouri and Arkansas, they found new jobs and new lives in Los Angeles or Detroit.

The result was boom towns with rapidly expanding populations. Because of its proximity to Los Angeles aircraft manufacturers, for instance, Burbank, California, zoomed from twelve thousand to sixty thousand during the war’s first two years. On the other coast, Elkton, Maryland, was a sleepy farm town until a giant ammunition plant was built there; its population doubled from six thousand to twelve thousand. Four of every five of those newcomers were young, unmarried women, most of whom arrived on buses from the surrounding countryside. The same was true at munitions plants in such places as Childersburg, Alabama, and Aberdeen, Mississippi—except that there, many of the new workers were African-American women who came from share-cropping families.

Nor were all boom towns actually towns, as big cities grew bigger. Dallas, Los Angeles, Portland, San Francisco, and Seattle all saw population increases of more than a third. Washington, D.C., almost literally burst at its seams; even high-ranking officials often had trouble finding a place to live. The majority of newcomers there were “government girls,” the unmarried women recruited to staff military offices, but some were officers’ families who found homes away from downtown D.C. A dozen farm towns along its Maryland and Virginia borders began their transformation into suburbs during the war, while south of Washington, the Navy’s mammoth shipyards brought a 61 percent population increase to Norfolk, Virginia.

Occasional boom towns were absolutely artificial, the result of congressional delegations powerful enough to bring new federal installations to their state. That was the case for Pocatello, Idaho, and its Farragut Naval Training Station, which had 776 new buildings—at a time when boom towns

elsewhere were desperate for construction materials. Some buildings were dormitories for unmarried female employees, as the training center grew so large that it became the state's largest "city" during World War II. Over forty thousand people were assigned or employed there, and almost three hundred thousand sailors trained there, some of them taught by the Navy's new WAVES.

Most of migration, however, was from north to south and from the heartland to the coasts. Especially California, Florida, and Texas were totally transformed by the war: California's population, for example, soared from 9,733,262 in the 1940 census to 14,486,527 in 1950; in the following decade, it would displace New York as the nation's most populous state. The chief reason for such population growth was the warm climates of these states, which made troop training easier, as well as their long coastlines, which not only benefited shipbuilding, but also aircraft manufacture. Aircraft manufacture especially centered itself on the West Coast, where planes would be essential to the vast Pacific Theater of Operations. Another factor in siting new war facilities was the power of a state's congressional delegation, and California benefited because of Congresswoman Florence Kahn.

After Pearl Harbor brought greater urgency to conservation of resources, the government intervened to make migration less random. Gasoline and tires had to go overseas, where tanks and planes in the early battles in North Africa desperately needed fuel and replacement parts. Instead of using scarce resources as workers undertook their own defense-job searches, the Labor Department (headed by Frances Perkins) began to designate "areas of critical labor shortage." It sought to relocate people to these areas who already lived relatively nearby—especially unmarried women who would not bring a family.

Many married women, however, also wanted to live in an area with the "critical labor" label, even if the woman did not intend to work outside the home herself. The War Department exempted skilled men from the draft if they were employed in "essential industries," and especially after the military started drafting fathers of young children, many women encouraged their husbands to find draft-exempt employment.

Some of the geographical areas termed critical do not sound especially industrial today, but they had some resource that made the place important then. For example, the Ravenna-Warren region of Ohio, which is just north of Youngstown and Akron, was termed in critical need of ironworkers. Other examples of "critical labor" areas around the Great Lakes were LaPorte/Michigan City, Indiana and Elmira/Binghamton, New York. On the East Coast, Bridgeport/Stamford, Connecticut, may have been the area most in need of workers, while on the Gulf of Mexico, Beaumont/Port Arthur, Texas, between Houston and New Orleans, was perhaps the prime example.

Every available space was taken by newcomers in such boom towns. Because precious materials and time were vital to weaponry, they could not be used for civilian housing. It was almost impossible to buy steel or lumber or any of the

basics to build, and people simply had to get along with the existing housing. Newcomers lucky enough to rent a room or an apartment were strongly pressured to share their space. It was not uncommon, for example, that a woman who worked the night shift at a defense factory would share her bedroom with another woman who worked in the day. Some even slept double in single beds.

Married women with families, of course, had greater difficulty finding a home. They rented basements, attics, garages—and this unhappy circumstance often had the unexpected effect of encouraging more women to take jobs. Because there was frustratingly little housework that could be done, some women who never before had envisioned themselves as anything but a housewife now became part of the paid labor force.

For property owners, there was a similar unexpected effect: millions of women who never intended to pursue an income-earning occupation nonetheless found themselves making great money as landladies. Advertising campaigns on radio and in the print media insisted that it was one's patriotic duty to rent unused rooms, and countless women responded, thus earning the first independent money of their lives. Not only could this be a financial bonanza, but especially if a woman's husband was in the military, she also might be glad to have the companionship of other women in her home.

More often, though, the situation was less pleasant for the renter, who could be easily exploited. One enterprising couple in Elkton, Maryland, for example, moved in with relatives and rented their vacant house. They told a writer for *Harper's* that they rented "to twenty-two girls at three dollars and fifty cents apiece" each week. They were not embarrassed to add that "four girls sleep in the living room, two in the kitchen." The twenty-two renters shared one bathroom.

Already by 1942, the housing shortage was so urgent that the government had to acknowledge that, in some areas, the private sector could not handle it. The solution was dormitory-like housing for unmarried women, who especially dominated the munitions industry. *Architectural Record* explained:

Many of our largest new plants are located well away from established communities; automobile tires are scarce; gasoline is rationed ... In the face of shortages of materials, obvious advantages derive from concentrating plumbing facilities for the use of many, rather than providing separate facilities for each individual or family unit. And since this shelter is urgently needed and in many cases only for the duration, it seems the height of folly ... to build an entire house.

Their proposed blueprint showed long rows of bed and bath rooms, as well as a porch, a lobby (with one telephone), and space for a "pantry in case of occupancy by women; storage in case of occupancy by men."

West Coast planners were especially likely to think creatively and in terms of families. Shipyards there that were operated by the Kaiser corporation were unequaled in their thoughtful attention to the needs of female employees, and their own boom town of Vanport City, Oregon, was extremely innovative. On six hundred acres, it provided not



only housing, but also organized services that won the approval of writer Susan B. Anthony II, the niece of the great feminist. She said that the overnight town

takes care of forty thousand workers in the Kaiser shipyard at Portland ... Wives are not admitted to the ten thousand war apartments unless they, too, are making ships or working in other war production. Working wives, instead of coming home from the day, swing, or graveyard shift to start another eight hour job of marketing, cooking, and washing [dishes], eat at the cafeteria operated for them and their husbands.

That sort of progressive employer was rare, though, and most war workers in boom towns crowded together in bleak rooms, arguing with landlords about the amount of toilet paper they used. Others lived in "tourist courts" bankrupted by gas and tire rationing or in tiny trailers or vermin-infested shanties leftover from the Great Depression—for which they nonetheless had to pay high rents. Even new housing was built to be torn down, with cheap materials, spartan decor, and dreary sameness. Such housing, too, often imposed the same rules that then were common in women's college dormitories: no male visitors; no cooking in rooms; lights out at midnight, etc.

But what young women complained about most was the lack of social opportunity. Such towns often had only one movie theater, and in a time before television, hundreds of young women packed themselves into its unairconditioned space on Saturday nights. Few other recreational facilities existed, nor was eating out a viable option. Small towns had few restaurants in any case, and many closed during the war years because they could not get either rationed food or workers, who could earn more elsewhere. Month after month, women ate the same food at the same dreary company canteen.

Worse, an unfortunate number of longtime boom-town residents were openly hostile to newcomers, and defense workers said that they often felt unwelcome even at churches. Stores were slow to stock items that young women wanted to buy, and they did not increase their hours of operations, despite crowds of shoppers. Banks, post offices, and other institutions were very nearly impossible to deal with: open only during prime working hours, their managers seemed not to understand that the housewife who traditionally took care of these family errands now was at work. Especially for night workers, even getting a paycheck cashed turned into a hassle. These were serious problems, and the business leaders of too many communities, especially in the East, did not appear to care.

Some towns even imposed curfews, clearly intended to limit the activity of women who were, in fact, giving up their youth to make bombs. Organizations such as the USO and Red Cross did create clubhouses in booming areas, but their intended guests were military men, not female defense workers. Female soldiers, too, often had recreation rooms in their barracks, but for the civilian "production soldier," the need for recreation and soul-restoration was largely overlooked.

At the same time, boom town problems also were real

for the women who were permanent residents. They saw their water and sewage systems fail because of excessive use; they saw their children's teachers desert the classroom because teachers could earn more at the local defense plant. The response, though, too often was denial and hostility to newcomers. As people poured into the Pentagon that was under construction at Arlington, Virginia, for example, the town's elementary schools simply refused to accept more children, leaving new families in bewilderment.

Municipal services also were overtaxed elsewhere, but Arlington may have demonstrated the most indifferent attitude of any boom town: in one case, the town evicted families from new housing—after the families had endured months of waiting for plumbing connections to sewage lines. A congressman averred that military officers had told him they were more worried about losing their families to diseases caused by bad sanitation than they were about losing their own lives in battle.

African Americans and other minorities suffered most from these problems. Segregation remained routine, and black families knew that they could not rent most rooms or eat in most restaurants under any circumstances. They, too, were laying down their lives, but most laws that limited their lives remained in place until well after the war's end. They frequently found themselves pushed into smaller and smaller ghettos as towns became overcrowded. In Washington, D.C., for example, the traditionally black neighborhood of Foggy Bottom instead filled up with new State Department employees.

In addition to boom towns created by defense industries, other towns boomed as women accompanied their husbands to training camps within the United States. More than any other category of migrant, these women suffered the hostility of local residents, for they were ignoring the advice that the military, magazines, and almost every other sanctioned societal voice heaped upon them. Such a woman was supposed to stay home, not use vital railroad seats and housing resources simply because she wanted to be with the man she loved during what might be the last months of his life.

Such women were most likely to encounter overcrowding in southern towns, for army training camps were disproportionately located where the weather was good and where congressmen with seniority appropriated the money. Places such as San Antonio, Texas, and Tampa, Florida, saw tens of thousands of "waiting wives" arrive, most of them clueless about where they would stay or what they would do. Many war babies were born in such towns—and their mothers were criticized for overcrowding medical facilities already strained by soldiers.

Other training camps were far from even a mid-size city such as Tampa or San Antonio. Writer Barbara Van Doren Klaw, a sophisticated member of an old New York City family, spent her husband's last months of training at Neosho, Missouri. The USO director there opined that "Army wives frankly were a bother," and when he heard that these women were malnourished because of high prices for poor food



in the town's few eating facilities, he smugly commented that his "restaurant was at home." After eating out one day, though, he came to understand the legitimacy of complaints and began a nutritious lunch program. At least two hundred army wives a day patronized it.

Other women were not married when they arrived, but came to become so. Seattle, for example, saw a 300 percent increase in marriage licenses as many a woman took the last seat on a crowded train to go west and marry her sailor before he shipped out. A *Collier's* writer said of young women in San Diego:

The hotels put out cots in the halls or let them sleep sprawled uncomfortably in the chairs in the lobby. One hotel not only lets them sleep in the lobby but provides the women with pillows, and when the first guests check out in the morning, the stranded ladies are invited up to the vacated rooms, to freshen up and have a bath free of charge.

When the war ended, boom towns such as Neosho, Missouri, and Elkton, Maryland, appeared happy to revert to their previous conditions. City fathers who imposed curfews and who were unwilling to invest in sewer systems seemed willing to give up their boom town status and to trade prosperity for peace and quiet. In other places, though, especially on the West Coast and in Florida, the war permanently changed everything, as boom towns continued to boom.

Many women discovered that they liked San Diego or Miami more than Omaha or Des Moines. This was particularly true for women whose husbands were in the Navy, especially in the Pacific Theater of Operations. They could easily find jobs in aircraft factories and shipyards on the West Coast—and they would be there if their husbands had a chance to get back to port. They also had the emotional benefit of sharing this stressful time with other young women in the same circumstances. This was important to many; they bonded with other women and did not want to go home, where no one would understand in quite the same way. After a while, the new town became home—and the nation's population shifted south and west.

**See also:** African-American women; aircraft workers; birth rate/birth control; "government girls"; housing; landladies; magazines; marriage; movies; munitions; North Africa; Pacific Theater of Operations; Pearl Harbor; Perkins, Frances; rationing; recreation; recruitment; Red Cross; refugees; shipbuilding; teachers; USO; WAVES; wives of servicemen

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### BOURKE-WHITE, MARGARET (1906–1971)

Called "Maggie" during her youth in New York and Cleveland and later dubbed "Peggy" by World War II colleagues, Bourke-White fashioned her surname by combining her mother's maiden name with her own. The wanderlust that would make her one of the most famous women of the war was apparent before she reached legal adulthood: by the time she graduated from Cornell University in 1927, she had attended six colleges and ended a brief marriage by divorcing. That divorce, in fact, was the impetus for her creation of a new name.

She learned photography at Cornell and had established herself as a freelance industrial photographer when the new *Fortune* magazine, a business-oriented publication, hired her in 1929. That conservative affiliation did not prevent Bourke-White from making a communist country the subject of her first book, *Eyes on Russia* (1931). It appealed to many Americans suffering from the Great Depression, and she followed it with two more photo books of the Soviet Union. Less than a decade after she graduated from college, Bourke-White was famous enough that one of her photographs was chosen for the cover of the first issue of *Life* magazine in 1936.

Despite her personal success, however, the economic pain that most people endured during that era deepened her leftist views. As she traveled with controversial novelist Erskine Caldwell through the Deep South, she abandoned the "machine age" industrial photography that had made her famous to concentrate on portrayal of human suffering. *You Have Seen Their Faces* (1937) not only set a new photographic standard, but also documented the poignancy of those hungry years.

She married Caldwell in 1939, and they published two more joint books before divorcing three years later. *Say, Is This the U.S.A.?* (1941) continued their economic themes, but with *North of the Danube* (1939), Bourke-White returned to her international interests. That book came out in the first year of the war in Europe, and World War II would absorb her for the next overwhelming years.

Bourke-White was the only foreign photographer in Moscow when Germany's fascists broke their earlier agreement and attacked Russian communists in June of 1941. When, six months later, Japan bombed Hawaii's Pearl Harbor and the United States entered the war, she was the first woman to be accredited by the U.S. Army as a war correspondent. She soon established a reputation equal to that of any man in the profession.

When the United States invaded North Africa to expel the Germans who had occupied it, Bourke-White arrived on a ship that endured torpedoes: as soon as censorship would allow it, she informed Americans about this with a *Life* report, "Women in Lifeboats." She lived with troops during the bloody battles from its deserts on to the Italian peninsula in 1943; she went through the devastating 1944 "Battle of the Bulge" in central Europe; and was with famed General George Patton when he crossed the German border in 1945. During all of this, and in an age prior to computers and digital photography, she sent *Life* photographs that brought the war into millions of American living rooms. This was especially important to women, whose knowledge of their loved ones' lives was largely dependent on the print media.

Bourke-White's most important contribution, however, was immediately after the war, when American soldiers discovered Nazi death camps. When she took graphically detailed pictures of the horrors of Buchenwald, *Life's* editorial board debated whether or not to publish them. In earlier warfare, publishers held to a "gentlemen's agreement" that horrific aspects of combat not be shown, but Bourke-White's photos were so compelling that editors defied convention and published them. That the unspeakable evidence of fascist cruelty became available to the world's conscience is to the everlasting credit of *Life* and Margaret Bourke-White.

She published the sarcastically-titled *Dear Fatherland, Rest Quietly: A Report on the Collapse of Hitler's Thousand Years* in 1946 and continued to roam the postwar world. She covered rebellions in Africa against their formerly powerful European colonial masters. She went on to the Korean War and took the last photo of India's Mahatma Gandhi before he was assassinated. Despite the onset of Parkinson's disease, Bourke-White published more photo books and remained on *Life's* staff for thirty-three years. She finally retired in 1969, just two years before her death.

Bourke-White's most important work on this era, however, is *The Taste of War*, which she first issued in 1946; it since has been regularly reprinted. The book is an anthology of her wartime articles, beginning with the prewar trip she took with Caldwell through Russia and China and continuing on through the postwar occupation of Germany. Although a stellar writer, it was photography that motivated her: during the early Nazi bombing raids over Moscow, for example, she wrote:

I had begun making time exposures ... with one camera in operation. As the raids increased in intensity, I worked with four ... My fifth camera ... I had transferred to the basement ... The possibility of being left without a single

camera grew to be an obsession, so I always took care to divide the risk.

As time went on, our routine was perfected to the point of seeing that our room was stocked with beer and sandwiches well before the alarm sounded; and later, as other journalists moved into our hotel, we used to keep open house during a raid ... When the [safety] patrol had completed its round, silent pajama-clad figures would steal into our room. I believe that most of the Moscow raids described in the American press were viewed from our splendid balcony.

Later, as she covered battlefields in eastern Europe, she "used flash bulbs to augment the weak light" of winter. Because soldiers were constantly moving, she took photos early in the morning before marches began. She was especially fascinated by "the interesting types ... Mongols, Ukrainians, Siberians, Uzbeks, Kazaks, and Turkmenians, their faces wet under their dripping raincoats. And it was always raining."

At the war's end, Bourke-White hurried to take photographs of concentration camps and military installations before Germans could destroy the evidence of war crimes. She hired a pilot and small plane, writing:

We lived a gypsy life in that cub, with a couple of jerry-cans of gas under the seat, so we could land on a country road or edge of a field to refuel ... We hedge-hopped in the little plane over the length and breadth of occupied Germany, photographing practically every major city and bombed industrial center, from altitudes that varied from twenty feet to two miles.

Perhaps the most revealing of these reports, however, did not center not on photography, but instead on an old friendship. Bourke-White had met Hildegard Roselius in New York, when Roselius studied at the famed Columbia School of Journalism, and she made a great effort to find her friend in Bremen at the war's end. She was shocked to discover that even this trained journalist had thoroughly accepted Hitler's propaganda. Although the formerly wealthy Roselius was reduced to such poverty that she lived in a bombed-out Bremen house that lacked two exterior walls, she did not regret her support for fascism. "Hitler never knowingly told a lie," she assured Bourke-White, insisting that "our German radio always gave the true news."

Such attitudes confirmed Bourke-White's resolution to document Germany's wrongs. She tracked down atrocities at even such obscure places as Erla, where slave laborers had toiled at a rural factory—a site that Bourke-White found by following "a peculiar odor" that led to an acre of charred bones. More than most people, Margaret Bourke-White understood the depth of worldwide suffering that the war caused, and in photographing it, she earned the respect of decent men and women around the globe.

**See also:** Bubley, Esther; censorship; correspondents, war; European Theater of Operations; Lange, Dorothea; magazines; North Africa; occupied Germany; prisoners of war; radio

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## BOYCE, WESTRAY BATTLE (1901–1972)

The second director of the Women’s Army Corps (WAC), Westray Boyce, replaced famed founder Oveta Culp Hobby. Before that, Boyce commanded WACs in the Mediterranean Theater Operations—and during this stressful time, she also had a teenage daughter back in the States.

A native of Rocky Mount, North Carolina, she did not fit the stereotype of a female military commander. Lt. Colonel Betty Bandel, who accompanied Hobby on an inspection tour of North Africa late in 1943, described then-Major Boyce as the “ideal of southern gentlewoman.” Her unusual first name reflected the two hundred-year Carolina history of the Battle family; marriage changed her surname to Boyce, but she was widowed young. When the war began, she was working as an administrator of the Depression era’s Works Progress Administration.

Aware that such employment would end with the war’s beginning, she left her teenage daughter in the care of her family and joined the WAC in 1942. At forty-one, she was one of the corps’ oldest members, and because she also was small in stature, some affectionately called her “Little Mama.” She graduated with its second officers candidate class at Fort Des Moines, Iowa, and rose from lieutenant to major in just two years.

Most of that time she served in North Africa and Italy, where WACs under her command specialized in radio and

telephone communication, handling secret messages. They lived in tents and in abandoned buildings, often damaged by shells and bombs. After her troops moved up into Europe via the Italian peninsula, Boyce returned to the United States in August 1944. She and other WACs, including some enlisted women in her overseas command, were honored for this service with the Legion of Merit. Promoted to lieutenant colonel, she became deputy director to top commander Hobby, at a time when the corps numbered about one hundred thousand women. On July 12, 1945, Boyce was appointed to head the WAC.

Just before the news became public, her friend Betty Bandel—who also was considered for the top post—wrote in a confidential letter to her mother:

Westray ... is the one who entertained ... me so royally in Africa and Italy. She is a North Carolinian, small, gray-haired, almost a professional Southerner. Her manners are perfect, her speech charming, her 18-year-old daughter well-brought up. She is so soft and so sweet in manner that, at first, she appears almost too good ... to us rough and ready customers... The manner is absolutely natural, however ... Westray has absolute personal integrity, great moral courage, and complete devotion to the WAC mission and the army mission ... I [am] confident that she will do a splendid job.

Westray Boyce needed that support from her colleagues: she faced a hostile public, not because of herself, but because people were shocked and angry about Hobby’s resignation. All military personnel were in the war “for the duration,” and although the war in Europe was over, the Pacific Theater Operations against the Japanese raged on. What critics did not know, however, was that Hobby had been hospitalized and was eligible for a medical discharge. Her resignation was simply a bureaucratic move that made it faster for Deputy Director Boyce to assume command.

She gave immediate attention to opening the planned School for WAC Personnel Administration. Based at Indiana’s Purdue University, it was intended, according to writer Sylvia Bugbee, “to revitalize WAC officers who had too long been in the field, often isolated from other officers and less than enthusiastically supported by their male counterparts.” The school would serve as an ideal networking opportunity that allowed these female military executives to exchange information and ideas from their worldwide commands.

Some of Boyce’s WACs were assigned to the Manhattan Project, the top-secret construction of the atomic bomb. Their work came to fruition in August 1945, when two of the powerful nuclear explosives were dropped on Japan; the formal surrender was in September. Nonetheless, the need for WACs continued, especially in occupied Germany, where Dwight D. Eisenhower, the top commander in the European Theater Operations, very much wanted their skills.

During the remainder of 1945 and on into 1946, Colonel Boyce oversaw the discharge of the vast majority of her one hundred thousand troops. She stayed quietly neutral on the question of the corps potential elimination, and this



leadership style may have proven best with her male Pentagon colleagues. Instead, it was Eisenhower and General George C. Marshall who made the case for the Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948. That legislation, which ensured a permanent place for women in the military, was well on its way to passage when Boyce resigned in 1947, and Colonel Mary A. Hallaren became the third WAC director.

Like Hobby, Hallaren, and others who would command the corps, Boyce never rose to the rank of general in the way that a man with similar responsibilities would have. Not until 1966, when Elizabeth P. Hoisington was promoted to brigadier general, was the WAC finally headed by a woman with proper rank.

A second marriage changed Westray Boyce's name to Long, and she lived in retirement near Rye, New York. She is buried at Rocky Mount, North Carolina, and a historical marker there commemorates her.

*See also:* **Bandel, Betty; decorations; European Theater of Operations; Des Moines, Fort; Hobby, Oveta Culp; North Africa; Pacific Theater of Operations; rank; Women's Armed Services Integration Act; Women's Army Corps**

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### BRECKINRIDGE, MARY MARVIN (1905–2002)

Called "Marvin," Breckinridge was born to an old Kentucky family that included such strong women as suffragist Madge Breckinridge and Sophonisba Breckinridge, the world's first woman to earn a doctorate in political science. Through her mother, Mary Marvin Breckinridge also inherited great wealth; her maternal grandfather was rubber manufacturer B.F. Goodrich.

Although these advantages helped build her career, Breckinridge nonetheless repeatedly demonstrated ability and courage. She pioneered documentary film making with a 1930 work on her cousin, Frontier Nursing Service founder Mary Breckinridge, and made other films in the early thirties. By 1939, however, she had made the transition to photojournalism, with articles in such popular magazines as *Look* and *Harper's Bazaar*.

Breckinridge had just finished photographing a Nazi rally in Germany's Numernberg for *Life* when Germany invaded Poland on September 1, 1939. She had gone on to Lucerne, in neutral Switzerland, when the *blitzkrieg* began and Europe's nascent conflict erupted into World War II. By September 3, when Britain declared war on Germany, she was back in

London—and that night, German planes bombed England for the first time.

Edward R. Murrow, an extremely popular and respected reporter for the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS), decided to put Breckinridge on the air to describe the European scene. World War II was the first time in human history that radio could almost instantly inform the public of what was happening, and Americans found Breckinridge's Kentucky voice to be both informed and trustworthy. She proved so popular that CBS hired her: she would be the only woman among the famed group of broadcast journalists that developed under Murrow's leadership, a group that included men such as Eric Severide and Walter Cronkite.

Breckinridge meanwhile continued her photojournalism, including unusual stories that explored the neutrality of Ireland and Sweden, something she found nearly inexplicable. The United States also was neutral at this time, however, which allowed Breckinridge to go to the heart of Hitlerism and broadcast from Berlin.

The Nazis tried to exploit the trust that radio listeners immediately placed in her, especially when she agreed to take a German plane to Norway soon after its April 1940 invasion. Her broadcasts from there, however, did not follow the script that the Nazis intended, and instead became a warning to the Low Countries that they likely would be Germany's next invasion target.

CBS meanwhile made Breckinridge head of its Amsterdam office, a position that was a first for a woman in radio, and she was there when the Netherlands fell to Germany in May. She sent radio reports as long as possible and took the last train for Paris before the borders closed. Paris fell in June, but Breckinridge did not join the many people who fled to England: instead, she went south to Italy. Although Mussolini's government also was fascist, it had not yet declared war against the United States, and she broadcasted from there.

During Breckinridge's earlier time in Berlin, however, an American diplomat there, Jefferson Patterson, had fallen in love with her. He had driven to Amsterdam before the Nazi invasion, and they became engaged; after her reports on Mussolini, she returned to Berlin, where they married on June 20, 1940.

That was the end of her meteoric radio career. The State Department routinely censored anything written by members of diplomatic families, and CBS understandably refused to broadcast censored material. The rule could have been waived, and Breckinridge did try to file innocuous reports, but her male superiors at the radio network and her husband's superiors at the State Department refused to cooperate with each other. Even the FBI's J. Edgar Hoover got involved, issuing a warning that her husband's career would be endangered if she continued with hers.

In that era, most people believed that a woman's public profile should end with marriage, and Mary Marvin Breckinridge thus adopted the persona of Mrs. Jefferson Patterson. After the couple was forced to leave Hitler's Berlin, they settled in Washington, D.C., and she reared two children. She



still was disguising her gender in 1980, when she published a book of photos and listed the author as “Marvin Breckinridge Patterson.” Prior to her death at ninety-seven, she donated her 512-acre Calvert County estate to the Maryland Historical Trust.

*See also:* **British women; correspondents, war; radio; refugees**

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## BRITISH WOMEN/AMERICAN WOMEN IN BRITAIN

Many of the new occupations and organizations for American women during World War II were modeled on the experience of British women. They were involved in the war more than two years prior American women, from September 3, 1939, when Germany invaded Poland: the United States did not declare war until December 8, 1941, after Japan attacked Hawaii's Pearl Harbor and after Germany declared war on the United States. In fact, during autumn of 1940, when German planes bombed England daily, it literally was more dangerous to be a London housewife than to be a soldier anywhere else in the world. Some sixty thousand British civilians ultimately would be killed in World War II, most of them because of bombs that fell from the skies over London.

After the war began with Germany's attack on Poland in the autumn of 1939, the Nazis went on to invade Denmark, Norway, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg during April and May of 1940; France fell in June. Italy's Mussolini was allied with Hitler's Germany, and although Spain and Portugal officially were neutral, both quietly supported the Nazis. Only Switzerland and Sweden were truly neutral, and Hitler thus had conquered or neutralized all of western Europe. A year later, in June 1941, he would break his pact with the Soviet Union and invade east, with troops extending almost two thousand miles from Finland to Bulgaria. The small island of Britain then stood alone, the sole defender of democracy.

Hitler believed that the British would surrender soon after Paris fell, but the “nation of shopkeepers,” as he derisively called them, did not concede. On August 8, 1940, the “Battle of Britain,” or “blitz,” began as German planes dropped massive quantities of explosives, especially on England's coasts and industrial cities, killing many more civilians than soldiers.

All night, every night for weeks, fire and ambulance sirens screamed, as civil defense workers, including women, dealt with explosions and fires. On one night alone, December 29, incendiary bombs started more than fifteen hundred fires in and around London. Sleep deprivation and psychological trauma added to the devastating physical loss. Royal Air Force fighters valiantly fought off the German Luftwaffe bombers, and Prime Minister Winston Churchill famously said that “never had so many owed so much to so few.”

In this desperate situation, Britain's women joined men in giving their all. First they gave up their children, with some being sent away from London's dangers already in 1939. Children went to the countryside for the duration, or they took ships across submarine-infested waters to extended family or even strangers in Canada and Australia. Some mothers went with their children, but others did not—and as the war lengthened and civilian travel was impossible, entire childhoods slipped away. Mothers and especially fathers were strangers to each other and to their children when the seven-year separation finally ended.

Countless British women lost their homes in the blitz, and there were no materials to rebuild: as in the United States later, metal, paint, and other resources instead had to go into ships, planes, and weaponry. The homeless moved in with others, and during the worst of the blitz, some adopted the habit of going straight from work to the neighborhood underground bomb shelter, not bothering to stop at their bombed-out homes that had neither electricity nor functioning plumbing.

As the bombing began, every woman rushed to make black-out curtains that would cover what little light families dared to use in the long hours of winter darkness at this northern latitude. Light can be spotted from far above in a black sky, and people painted many things black, including car lights, to prevent German pilots from seeing them. Black cloth and black paint became the most precious of resources. Those who lived in bombed-out areas learned to sleep and eat communal style, putting up with a total lack of privacy. Neighbors who disliked each other nonetheless had to share shelter space, and there was no choice except to eat the food prepared by whatever charity—usually run by women—could manage to get a meal together.

Already in World War I, British women had implemented communal feeding programs that allowed women to forego their usual marketing, cooking, and dishwashing chores. They expanded on this in World War II, making it easier for urban female factory workers to cope. Susan B. Anthony II, niece of the great suffragist, investigated programs such as “British restaurants,” low-cost government cafeterias that were set up over the protests of private restaurants to accommodate working women's families. Food rationing had begun in 1940, and Anthony elaborated:

Industrial workers are allowed more liberal rations of sugar, meat, cheese, fats, and preserves. Children get ... milk and any available eggs. Schools remain open during holidays and summer so that meals can continue throughout the year.

Nursing mothers and babies, three million of them, get free or low cost milk ... Every factory of any size in England is required by law to provide cafeterias or canteens.

Rationing would not completely end for more than a decade: the fundamental of bread was rationed until 1948, three years after the war was over. Rationing kept down prices so that the poor could afford to buy their share, but little food was available in any case and the lack of variety made life even more bleak. Yet many Britons were generous about using their few supplies to demonstrate their gratitude to Americans. Numerous American women would write about being invited for Christmas dinner or other occasions when it was clear that the housewife had saved her ration coupons for months to serve a treat such as a cake, which required both scarce sugar and eggs.

While Britain's traditional Red Cross specialized in emergency shelters and mass feeding, the newly organized Women's Voluntary Services (WVS) did outstanding civil defense work on the streets. WVS members enforced the black-out rules and were trained in first aid; they rushed to bombing sites and did the initial life-saving steps; they put out fires and drove ambulances. An *American Magazine* writer said in October 1941:

They have seen things which occasionally have shaken even their seasoned nerves. One ambulance driver told me of picking up a load of wounded after a bomb had fallen ... She was driving slowly to a first-aid station through the debris in the street, when she saw two small children... "all bedraggled with blood."

She hopped out and put her searchlight on them. They were lugging a round object.

"Please," they said, "can you stick Mummy's head on again?"

And yet, according to author Russell Birdwell, "during one horrible night" when "278 WVS women were bombed out of their homes ... only one was late for duty the next morning." By the midpoint of the war, over one thousand WVS members were dead in action in their homeland, "killed as they ... strove to save others." Their work continued as German "buzz bombs," the first versions of unmanned guided missiles, assailed England later in the war. The sound of these airborne explosives was unnerving, and American nurses working in English hospitals after D-Day said that patients told them that they preferred being back in a foxhole on the Continent to being in bed waiting for a buzz bomb to drop. In the end, from the blitz of 1940 through the V-2 rockets of 1945, German air attacks killed about forty-three thousand British civilians, most of them Londoners.

Long before that, some American women were prescient enough to see that democracy depended on helping the British, and by the summer of 1941, more than sixty U.S. nurses worked at Red Cross medical facilities in England. They crossed an ocean filled with German submarines, and eight such women died when their ship, the *Maasdam*, was torpedoed on a stormy June night. Others worked in England

for a year and a half before their nation joined them. One then told *Saturday Evening Post*:

The night the news of the Jap attack at Pearl Harbor came in, we went over to the recreation hall and curled up on the floor to listen to the radio. At two o'clock in the morning we heard the President's speech. Afterward, when the short wave brought us "The Star Spangled Banner," we all stood up. We felt so full of emotion we had to gulp and blink our eyes to keep it from spilling out.

Six months later, half of these women had traded their Red Cross uniforms for those of the (American) Army Nurse Corps and were bound for the front in North Africa. They traveled on military ships, and again, some were torpedoed. Meanwhile, Britain became a staging area for both Americans and others in exile from countries conquered by the Nazis. Crowded became even more crowded as tens of thousands of troops and support staff assembled in southern England. It was the center of the European Theater Operations (ETO), which prepared for Day-D, the June 1944 invasion to liberate Europe.

The wartime newcomers included dozens of female war reporters who based themselves in London, where they represented most major American newspapers. Magazines, including women's magazines, also sent many correspondents, and American women could read an article on British women almost every month. Among these writers were the third and fourth wives of novelist Ernest Hemingway, Martha Gellhorn and Mary Welsh. The latter wrote "British Women Have No Time for Tears" for *Life*; reprinted in *Reader's Digest* in October 1941, it was a positive factor for prioritizing the European war over the Pacific one when the United States entered the global conflict two months later. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt also wrote many magazine articles, including a report on her personal observations, "Women at War in Great Britain."

Britain had imposed a military draft for young men in 1939, and as the war emergency quickly became overwhelming, young women also were drafted, either for the military or for industrial and agricultural work. Only those who could prove hardship were exempt, and by 1942, almost two-thirds of all British women were in factories, on farms, or in the military. In August 1943, as all available younger women were at work, *Newsweek* reported that Britain had gone to a "Matron's Draft," requiring all women under age 50 "to register for compulsory labor service." Officials hoped that jobs would be "near their homes," but warned that they might "be sent all over the country." By 1944, according to writer Margaret Pickel, "proportionally, there are eight times as many women in war jobs in Great Britain" as in the United States.

Like those in the military, British women who were drafted for industrial work were paid—but also like the military, they were assigned to work that needed to be done, even if they disliked running a drill press or a grinding machine. As men moved into the army and navy, women replaced them in the shipyards and factories of Manchester, Liverpool, and the

industrial East End of London. Women did hard and heavy jobs, knowing that while they worked, they were an especially likely target for German bombs.

Other women were assigned to the Land Army, where they did agricultural work. They planted potatoes, harvested apples, milked cows, butchered chickens, and did whatever needed to be done to feed the nation and its soldiers. Because the island is not nearly large enough to grow all the food that its people need, it was imperative to increase production as much as possible with labor-intensive techniques. Canadian women also had an organized Land Army, and Canadian ships did their best to get essential food across the submarine-filled Atlantic. After the United States entered the war, it too developed a Women's Land Army—but it was volunteer and sporadic, unlike the much harsher experience of British women drafted for the duration. Even if a young Londoner abhorred shearing sheep in Scotland, her work there could be compelled.

In the military itself, Britain created three units for women: the Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS), which was the army affiliate; the Women's Royal Navy Service (WRENS); and the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF). Not everyone in Britain approved, of course, but when a conservative female writer condemned military women as "A Monstrous Regiment" in *Fortnightly*, many letters to the editor condemned her during the following months. Some leftists also disapproved of the draft, but because of their pacifist beliefs, not on the grounds of gender. In May 1942, *Christian Century* reported that "twenty-two feminine conscientious objectors to the draft are now on trial in London." Despite objections from both ends of the political spectrum, most Britons supported women in the military. These organizations would become models for their American counterparts in 1942, when Congress authorized the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC), the Navy's WAVES, and others. The two nations' female military units remained fundamentally different, however, because the U.S. corps were voluntary, while many British women felt the sting of compulsory service.

Before the American units existed, some dedicated American women joined the British military during 1940–41, especially experienced pilots who evaded American neutrality restrictions by flying from Canada to England. They enlisted in the ATA, the Air Transport Auxiliary, an experimental British program in which female pilots delivered new planes and performed other non-combat flying tasks. Americans would copy this with the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP), but at its beginning, the idea of a such unconventional work being done by women—and especially by foreign women—understandably took time for the British to process. Pauline Gower, writing in 1942, remembered the ambivalence that greeted her in 1940, and the job that American women went on to do:

Finally, we were accepted into the ATA—myself and eight others. We were, quite frankly, unpopular at the start and we had considerable prejudice to break down ...

The women's services were not in the working order that

they are today. No special sleeping or washing or comfort facilities—just bleak, cold airfields and when we got back to base, we had to lug our parachutes one and one-half miles to billets! I believe the rigors of that unforgettable winter left its mark on several of our band.

Virginia's Mary Lee Settle enlisted in the ground forces of the British WAAF during the period of American neutrality, and her memoir is an especially poignant example of this complex experience. Unlike Gowers, she was isolated from other Americans—and she also was not accepted by her British colleagues, who deemed her cultural differences as snobbery. Officers were even worse than enlisted women, and she cited several sad cases of unreasonably authoritarian discipline—including to her, a volunteer who did not have to be there.

The fact that many British draftees were lower-class women away from home for the first time and in the service unwillingly created huge morale problems and even mental illness. Settle wrote with pathos of a Cockney woman who, worried about her sickly "Mum" and unable to eat the bad mess hall food, hanged herself. Another woman, a cultured musician, was so depressed by WAAF life that she became mute. Settle herself was traumatized when, in a dark fog, a plane's whirling propellers decapitated a careless mechanic and sent his head flying at her.

The British people could see positive signs of ultimate victory by the time that U.S. troops began to arrive, but although the vast cruelties of the 1940 blitz were over, random bombing nonetheless continued. Katherine Keene was one of the first Americans to arrive with the Women's Army Corps (WAC) in 1943, and, according to author Elizabeth P. McIntosh, Keene later "noted that there was only one month when London experienced no air-raid activity in the [following] two and a half years."

The first African-American women also arrived in 1943, WACs landing in Glasgow, Scotland, and traveling by railroad to their assignment in Birmingham, England. A war correspondent for the *Chicago Defender*, a nationally-circulated African-American newspaper, reported:

As trainloads of the smartly uniformed women ... poured onto the station platform, a 30-piece white army band blared ... Past the lusty cheers of townspeople and down the blackout streets, the first overseas group of Negro Wacs marched to its home ... that formerly housed a first class boys' school.

The reality of the war came through for these African-American women, as they worked at mail sorting in bombed-out Birmingham, prior to moving on to Paris after its liberation. Meanwhile, one of them, Dorothy Dailey Jones, had a shock that was all too common for British women:

I had a friend in London, a young English woman I had met. I had visited her and her family a couple of times and was scheduled to visit them this particular weekend. So I went to their house and nobody was there. The entire block had been demolished. I never heard from her again.



By June of 1943, in fact, Britons had shot down almost forty-two hundred enemy planes that flew over their skies. Strengthened by such experience, British military women were the first to earn the respect of Dwight D. Eisenhower, who commanded the ETO and who would go on to argue for a permanent place for women in the military and government. One of the things that he observed, according to writer Keith Ayling, was the ability of British women to handle highly confidential information. "Experience in England," Ayling said, "proved quite conclusively that women can keep secrets better than men." American women followed that example when they joined the ETO and other secret units, including the Office of Strategy Services (OSS), the forerunner of today's Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). British intelligence agents also were crucial to the rescue of Agnes Jensen and other Americans whose plane crashed in German-occupied Albania.

Britain's industrial women also set some models that Americans would have done well to emulate. While Americans in defense plants routinely worked six days a week, with only Sundays off, some British factories split up time in chunks that made life more manageable. Working mothers could opt for morning shifts that allowed them to be home in the afternoon, and some factories offered shifts of three long days instead of the usual six, with two groups of women splitting the time in half.

While the British were more pragmatic than Americans in some ways, in other areas, they were less progressive. The American military had begun venereal disease prevention programs for its men after this proved a problem in World War I, but Britain did not—despite a 50 percent rise in infection rates among the civilian population and a 70 percent rise in the military during the war's first four years. The Archbishop of Canterbury "set his face resolutely against" such programs and accused sex educators of making a "medical problem [of] what is primarily a moral problem." According to sociologist Willard Waller, the archbishop also opposed notifying wives if their husbands were infected. Silence was the best policy, he said, because "we ought to ... make contraction of these diseases a matter of shame."

Some of the women who contracted these diseases were infected by American soldiers, and American men also were the cause of many illegitimate pregnancies. Especially late in the war and in the postwar period, much Red Cross work revolved around relationships between British women and American men: they dealt with paternity cases, marriage and divorce, and other complex legal and social problems. In addition to transitory sexual relations with unintended long-term results, many couples truly fell in love—but because the military discouraged marriage, some deliberately sought a pregnancy that would force officers to give permission for soldiers to wed. The required paperwork also was a chore often taken up by military chaplains, who intervened on behalf of the pregnant woman. Ultimately, some seventy thousand British women immigrated to the United States as war brides, most of them traveling free on U.S. government

ships in 1946. Many had a child or two, and most became permanent American citizens.

Finally, not all British women lived in Great Britain, for the island long had been exporting a large proportion of its people. Countless British families lived in colonies that ranged from Egypt to South Africa and on through the Arabian Peninsula to India and China. These women lived for even more years without knowing what the next day would bring, as Italy conquered North Africa's Abyssinia already in 1935, the same year that Japan and China went to war.

By 1937, two years before the European war began, Japan had captured Shanghai, Nanking, and other important Asian cities where many British people had homes and businesses. A few years later, the Japanese took British colonies in southeast Asia, including Burma and Java, Singapore and Rangoon. British women were forced to flee in all of these cases, as bombs rained and their homes turned into ashes and rubble.

Although anti-colonial sentiment was rising, most native peoples in North Africa and the Middle East feared Italian and German fascists more than their British colonial masters, and this was almost unanimously the case with the Japanese and other Asians. China, weak though it was, maintained its status as an ally, and other natives in occupied Japanese areas protected the British as much as they could. Especially Filipinos risked their lives to bring food to prisoners of war in Manila, where upward of five hundred British women were imprisoned, along with eighty-seven members of the American Army Nurse Corps taken there when Bataan fell.

Britain's royal family proved an outstanding morale model for the entire empire and especially the home island. Queen Elizabeth, wife of King George VI, made a radio broadcast explicitly appealing to American women in August 1941, several months prior to U.S. entrance into the war. Nor did she send her teenage daughters, the current Queen Elizabeth and the recently deceased Princess Margaret, away from England. Instead the princesses put on the uniforms that other young women wore and maintained a full schedule of morale-building visits to factories, military installations, and bombed-out communities. According to author Dorothy Laird, one of the queen's ladies-in-waiting recalled:

Not only did the Queen have all the courage in the world, she had the power to transfer it to you. When London was being heavily bombed and one had all sorts of problems to contend with at home, I used to arrive at the Palace ... feeling more or less battered ..., yet once I had seen the Queen I felt absolutely all right and ready to face anything.

More than that, the very practical queen insisted that she and her top staff learn to use rifles and revolvers. Author Anne Somset said that the queen was "determined that in the event of an invasion, she would not be taken hostage by the enemy." The public was extremely grateful for the leadership demonstrated by her and King George, especially because he had replaced his brother Edward on the throne in 1937—when Edward abdicated to marry the twice-divorced



Wallis Simpson, a Baltimore native and friend of Nazis. That couple, called the Duke and Duchess of Windsor, viewed Paris as their home, and when it fell, they lived out the war in Bermuda, far from possible Nazi contact.

Eleanor Roosevelt had helped consolidate international ties in the summer of 1939, when she invited King George and Queen Elizabeth to the United States. It was the first time that a reigning British monarch ever visited, and Roosevelt's critics complained when she served a variety of American foods, including hot dogs. The exchange proved successful, however, strengthening the bond between the two nations that played the strongest role in winning the war against fascism.

**See also:** African-American women; American Women's Voluntary Services; Army Nurse Corps; children; correspondents, war; D-Day; defense industries; draft; European Theater of Operations; Gellhorn, Martha; Jensen, Agnes; *Maasdam*; North Africa; nurses; rationing; Red Cross; Roosevelt, Eleanor; venereal disease; war brides; WAVES; Women's Airforce Service Pilots; Women's Army Auxiliary Corps; Women's Land Army

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### BROWN, MARY-AGNES (1902–1998)

As head of the Women's Army Corps (WAC) in the Pacific Theater Operations, Mary-Agnes Brown had perhaps the most adventurous command of any female officer in the war.

A native of Washington, D.C., Brown graduated from George Washington University and went on to earn two more degrees there. She began her career when she was still in her teens with a 1919 clerkship at the agency that became Veterans Administration. After earning her law degree, she rose to chief of legislative projects for the Veterans Administration; when she returned to the agency following World War II, she also was a chief adviser on female veterans. Brown served as president of the District of Columbia Women's Bar Association in 1959, was active at the international level of the Business and Professional Women's Clubs, was a trustee of Union Theological Seminary, and belonged to many other organizations, including the Women's National Democratic Club.

During World War II, however, she was one of the brilliant women recruited in the formative stages of what became the

Women's Army Corps (WAC). She rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel, just one step below that of Corps commander Oveta Culp Hobby, and with the title of executive director of the WAC, worked closely with Hobby in Washington. In 1944, as the war in the Pacific Theater Operations intensified, Brown transferred there and served on the inner staff of General Douglas MacArthur. When she left the Corps in 1946, Brown was honored with the several medals, including the Legion of Merit.

She returned to Washington and the Veterans Administration, while also serving as an advisor on women's issues to famed General Omar Bradley. She retired in 1959, and a late marriage changed her name to Groover. After dying at age ninety-six, she was buried in Arlington National Cemetery. Her papers from the war era are at Radcliffe College's Schlesinger Library.

*See also:* **Hobby, Oveta Culp; decorations; Pacific Theater of Operations; Women's Army Corps; veterans**

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### BUBLEY, ESTHER (1921–1998)

One of several significant photojournalists of the war era, Esther Bubley, began her career when she was very young, joining the federal Farm Security Administration (FSA) at the end of its existence during the Great Depression of the 1930s. She was just twenty when she came from her native Wisconsin to Washington, D.C., having completed a course in photography at the Minneapolis School of Design. Unlike many, Bubley would not get lost among the tens of thousands of young women who went to the nation's capital in search of a career during World War II.

Although she initially worked as a lab technician for the National Archives, Bubley soon achieved her ambition of working for Roy Stryker, who headed the FSA's photographic documentation project and was then in the process of transforming this expertise to new themes under the aegis of the Office of War Information (OWI). He hired Bubley in 1942, immediately upon seeing the photos she had snapped of Washingtonians as they prepared for war. Perhaps the most famous of her OWI projects was a series that portrayed the nation's travelers in the crowded, racially segregated bus system of 1943. Other work depicted women in boarding houses and in rationing lines.

After the war, Bubley freelanced for the nation's most popular magazines, including *Life*, *Saturday Evening Post*, and *Harper's Bazaar*, as well as women's magazines such *Ladies Home Journal* and *Good Housekeeping*. She also

accepted a number of corporate commissions, in which she demonstrated her particular talent for turning the mundane into the moving. When assigned to take photos at Standard Oil sites in Texas, for instance, she sought out portrayals of the forlorn lives of oil workers' wives. Her work had its first major exhibit at New York's Museum of Modern Art in 1948, and her four-decade career international career continued to inspire other expositions.

*See also:* **artists; magazines; Office of War Information; posters**

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### BUCK, PEARL SYDENSTRICKER (1892–1973)

Novelist Pearl Buck was at the height of her popularity during World War II, and perhaps exercised more influence than any other single person in shaping American attitudes towards China.

She was born in West Virginia to parents who were Presbyterian missionaries and grew up in China; the only exception was four years at Virginia's prestigious women's college, Randolph-Macon. After graduating in 1914 and returning to China, she married American agriculturalist John Lossing Buck in 1917 and moved with him to primitive northern China. She would retain his name for the rest of her life, although they were increasingly estranged. Desperate for money for a winter coat, Buck wrote her first story in 1925 and was surprised when *Asia Magazine* published it.

The family, which included a retarded daughter and an adopted daughter, had to hide from violence against foreigners during the next few years, but despite these desperate living conditions, Buck published *East Wind, West Wind* in 1930. Her second book, which followed the very next year, is deemed her greatest—even though she would write over a hundred more in several genres. *The Good Earth* (1931) was an immediate success; it not only won the Pulitzer Prize, but also was made into a play and an Academy Award-winning film. Translated into dozens of languages, it sold millions of copies and instantly made its author rich and famous.

Buck wrote *Sons* (1932) and *The Mother* (1934), and

permanently left China in 1934, soon after Japan completed its conquest of Manchuria. She made a lengthy exit through southeastern Asia, correctly foreseeing the violent end of colonialism there and coming of World War II. Back in the United States, she obtained a Nevada divorce, married her publisher in 1935, and made a Pennsylvania farmhouse her home thereafter. *A House Divided* came out that year, *The Exile* in 1936, and a two-volume translation from Chinese, *All Men Are Brothers*, in 1937.

For this body of work, she won the 1938 Nobel Prize—just eight years after her first book. She was the first American woman to win it—and one of very few women of any nationality before or since. Her feminist awareness came through in her acceptance speech in Sweden, when she said to the Nobel officials, “You ... cannot perhaps wholly understand what it means in many countries and even in my own, that it is a woman who stands here.”

As Japan took over China and French Indochina in the late 1930s and then attacked Americans in Hawaii and the Philippines in 1941, the nation began to focus on Asia. Many derived their information primarily from Pearl Buck especially two works published in 1942, the novel *China Sky* and the non-fiction *American Unity and Asia. What America Means to Me* (1943) was a ringing call for personal liberty, as opposed to the fascism of Germany and Japan.

In addition to books, including some for children and even a cookbook, Buck also wrote many articles for magazines. Those in *Ladies Home Journal*, *Woman's Home Companion*, and others interpreted the different values of East and West, while consistently arguing for internationalism and tolerance.

Going beyond writing, she organized the East and West Association in 1941 and set a personal example by adopting mixed-race children who were not acceptable in their native cultures. Her emphasis on the evils and stupidities of racism made Buck more controversial in the postwar era, especially when the Chinese resumed their civil war and its communists won in 1949. That year she co-wrote a dialog about racism, *An American Argument*, with African-American Eslanda Goode Robeson. Buck also published several books during this period under the pseudonym of “John Sedges,” as she hoped to see her work reviewed without prejudice against either her gender or her politics.

She also expanded on feminist themes such as illegitimacy, abortion, and infanticide, especially with the novels *Pavilion of Women* (1946) and *First Wife* (1947). Her autobiography, *My Several Worlds* (1954), added to her prewar autobiographical novel, *The Proud Heart* (1938). She formalized her non-writing efforts with the Pearl S. Buck Foundation in 1964 and continued her advocacy for the unwanted children of American fathers and Asian mothers on through the Korean and Vietnam wars.

Her books sold even better overseas than in America, but they remained popular with American readers, especially women, until her death in the last year of the Vietnam war. Most political and military leaders, however, ignored her

messages: Pearl Buck saw the future more accurately than they, and countless lives could have been saved had her knowledge of Asia been put to better use during and after World War II.

*See also:* **African-American women; Chiang, Madame; Chinese-American women; occupied Japan; Smedley, Agnes; underutilization**

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## BUNDLES FOR BRITAIN

Soon after the German blitz of Britain began in August 1940, New York's Natalie Wales Latham organized American women to create a relief effort that called became known as “Bundles for Britain.” Just thirty years old and socially well-connected, Latham had a strong awareness of global issues and the pragmatism to play a direct and necessary part. Almost a year earlier, in December 1939, she organized a knitting society in response to an appeal from Mrs. Winston Churchill warm clothing for sailors in the North Atlantic.

The “bundles” project utilized the resources and abilities of those unable to knit and soon became a national cause. With authorization from the State Department and donated space on Park Avenue, Latham worked closely with the London-based British War Relief Society. The initial appeal was for clothes to be sent to Londoners whose homes were destroyed; this soon expanded with a sewing room in Middleton, New York, where unusable clothing was reworked into smaller sizes or made into quilts.

Soon celebrities were leading drives for monetary help, and the public responded with donations ranging from a few cents to thousands of dollars. Latham expanded from clothing to medical supplies, and in less than a year, had raised some \$3 million. Despite this obvious executive ability, she kept her ego in check so well that few donors ever knew her name. Instead, it was “Bundles for Britain” that they understood, and the model became that of the postwar “CARE packages,” in which Americans donated canned food; soap, toothbrushes, and such essentials to devastated Europeans.

*See also:* **American Women's Voluntary Services; British women; food; dress; refugees; volunteers**



American women packing “Bundles for Britain,” for use by civilians whose homes had been bombed by Germany before the U.S. entered the war. The newspaper used as cushioning indicates that these bundles likely contained glass bottles of medicines. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*



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## BUSINESS AND PROFESSIONAL WOMEN’S CLUBS (BPW)

Perhaps the most active organization for feminist goals during the World War II era, the National Federation of Business and Professional Women’s Clubs (BPW) began soon after World War I. Its 1919 founding date was directly related to the fact that all American women finally obtained the vote in 1920. It differed from the older American Association of University Women (AAUW) in that it did not require members to be college graduates, and it was more focused on women’s employment rights than the contemporaneously new League of Women Voters. BPW single-mindedly aimed to improve the political and especially the economic status of women.

With its headquarters in Washington, D.C., BPW lobbied for wartime policy that opened countless new job categories to women. In addition to the millions of women who went to work at blue-collar tasks, the war also provided new managerial positions—and BPW particularly aimed to get women into those job slots. It developed a “Talent Bank” of resumes from qualified women across the nation to refute those who said no women had the credentials for such appointments. Mary-Agnes Brown, for instance, was one of those credentialed and experienced women who benefited from her association with BPW: a career attorney for the

Veterans Administration, she commanded the Women’s Army Corps in the South Pacific during World War II.

BPW’s president during this era was Margaret Hickey of St. Louis, who also chaired the Women’s Advisory Committee to the War Manpower Commission that recruited the labor force necessary to win the war. She and other BPW leaders worked closely with First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins, and others in the Roosevelt Administration to see that women’s views were considered on war-related issues and that women were appointed to policy-making bodies. They were not completely successful: men continued to be over-represented even in such areas as rationing, which affected women more than men—but women certainly got more appointments than they would have without BPW’s efforts.

Mary Anderson, longtime head of the Women’s Bureau of the Department of Labor, particularly credited BPW with working to change regulations that prohibited marriage between federal employees. “If a man and his wife were both working for the government,” she explained, “it was almost always the wife who had to give up her job.” Especially in Washington, the rule “broke up families ... Some husbands and wives separated and lived apart so that they would not be considered one family.” When this finally changed, however, it was not so much because of effective feminist lobbying as because the nation needed all of its experienced employees, male and female, during World War II.

BPW’s most important contribution to the war may have been in its monthly magazine, *Independent Woman*. More than any similar publication of the era, it regularly revealed women’s discontent with their secondary place in business and government. Articles during each of the war years also indicated the organization’s current concerns.

In 1941, for example, when the nation faced a severe shortage of nurses to deal with the casualties that soon would flood hospitals, it published “Be a Nurse and See the



World.” When the Asian war expanded in 1944, it offered “Nurses for China’s Army.” Another aspect of this issue was a 1943 call for “Commissioning Women Physicians in Medical Corps.”

A year ahead of the entrance of non-nursing women into the military, in July 1941, BPW’s magazine asked, “Should Women Be Enlisted?” The following July, it answered itself with “We’re In The Army Now.” When the war intensified, raising the question of drafting women with essential skills, *Independent Woman* proclaimed in March 1944, “Women Accept Their Responsibilities.”

Most attention went to the civilian economy. “Mobilizing Womanpower” encapsulated 1942’s major concern, while that year also saw publication of such revealing titles as “On Registering Women: Voluntary or Compulsory?” The theme continued in 1943 with “There Must Be No Idle Women,” as well as “D-Day and H-Hour for Women” in 1944. BPW profiled women in defense industries with stories such as “Anchors Aweigh!” and “I Helped Build Fighter Planes.”

Nor was all the focus on women’s responsibilities, as the publication also offered advice to employers with “Under-Use of Womanpower,” “Why Won’t They Let ME Help?” and “Women Don’t Quit If ...” Public employment, too, was addressed in items such as “Women Work With Uncle Sam.” Finally, the organization probably did more than any other to publicize the agricultural work of the Women’s Land Army, offering at least one appeal for workers during every crop season.

BPW also demonstrated prescience with “Just Around the

Postwar Corner,” published well before the war was over, in February of 1944; in May, it followed up with, “We Lay Our Plans for Postwar Jobs.” It promoted networking with newly credentialed female veterans in a 1945 article, “Our Hand of Fellowship to Returning G.I. Janes.” Margaret Hickey led the inquiry on “What’s Next for Women?” in 1946, while BPW also illuminated broader issues, such as “Women’s Obligation for Peace.”

The organization continues today, but its publication, *National Business Woman*, is more conservatively named. It joined other feminist groups in the unsuccessful push for the Equal Rights Amendment in the 1970s and 1980s, and with about thirty-five hundred local clubs across the nation, continues to work on an improved status for employed women.

*See also:* **Anderson, Mary; Brown, Mary-Agnes; draft; Hickey, Margaret; hospitals; nurses; Pacific Theater of Operations; Perkins, Frances; Roosevelt, Eleanor; War Manpower Commission; Women’s Army Corp; Women’s Land Army**

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## CADET NURSE CORPS

If the name of this program sometimes was confused, its objective was not: often called the “Student Nurse Corps” or variations of those words, it clearly aimed to recruit more nurses—and in the context of the time, that meant young women. Only women belonged to the Army Nurse Corps (ANC) or the Navy Nurse Corps (NNC), both of which had been established early in the twentieth century. Unlike male military members who were trained after their enlistment, women who joined the ANC or NNC had to first earn their nursing degree at their own expense.

In December, 1941, ANC members were caught in the Japanese invasion of the Philippines; these nurses worked themselves to literal exhaustion in Bataan and Corregidor, and some ended up as prisoners of war. The tragedy made it clear that the nation was desperately short of skilled nurses, and one of their responses was the Cadet Nurse Corps. It existed under the aegis of the U.S. Public Health Service, which belonged bureaucratically to the Surgeon General. Its leadership also worked closely with the Red Cross, the American Nurse Association, and high school educators to attract more young women into the profession.

The need was great. Several months before Pearl Harbor, the U.S. Public Health Service reported some ten thousand vacancies for hospital nurses—not including the many non-hospital positions that nurses fill. Health officials wanted fifty-five thousand new nursing students in 1942, and in 1943, when the Cadet Nurse Corps finally began, the recruitment quota was raised to sixty-five thousand.

There were good reasons why the nation faced a nursing shortage: in addition to the millions of casualties that the war would bring, many things about the profession—and especially public perception of it—needed reform. In

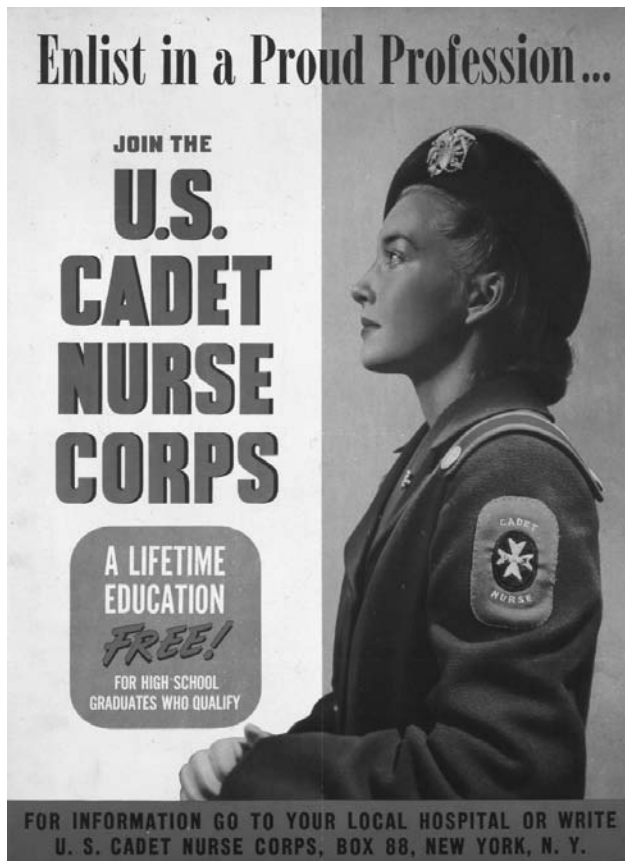
the decade prior to the war, during the Great Depression of the 1930s, relatively few women could afford to go to nursing school, and the nation had done virtually nothing to correct that.

Worse, many upper-class people still regarded public health in general as something that applied only to the poor: wealthy families did not send their loved ones to hospitals; instead, the doctor came to the home, where private nurses carried out his orders—as well as performing the menial tasks that nursing involves. Many opinion makers thus regarded nurses as only slightly more qualified than the average household servant.

Nursing schools did an unfortunate amount to reinforce this view. Schools almost always operated in conjunction with a hospital, where students lived and worked under strict supervision. Hospitals routinely exploited these students, requiring them to spend a great deal of time changing bedpans, serving meals, and doing other menial chores on the wards instead of being in a classroom to study anatomy, physiology, etc. Their free time was limited, and discipline often was harsh.

As the economy improved with the beginning of the war, young women began to have alternatives to this self-sacrificing life. They saw that they could earn more in a defense plant doing jobs formerly done by men, and their non-working time was free of restrictions. Societal gender rules were changing and young women no longer had to pay tuition to a nursing school for the “privilege” of providing free labor to a hospital.

The Public Health Service and other interested parties thus had a greater task than merely advertising for women to go into nursing: they also had to change public attitudes and reform the habits of hospitals and nursing schools.



The war's greatest occupational shortage was nurses, who were assumed to be young women. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

Young women only could be attracted to nursing schools if the profession was seen as truly modern science, and the creation of that image called for a new organization. Thus the U.S. Cadet Nurse Corps was born.

Like many other ideas related to nursing, it was primarily the brainchild of Representative Frances Bolton of Ohio. The need for nurses was so clear and Bolton's plans for addressing the need were so well thought out that not a single member of Congress voted against the Bolton Act, which passed both houses and was signed by the president in May of 1943.

The Public Health Service was ready with advertising that—like almost everything else during World War II—emphasized an official uniform. That of the Cadet Nurse Corps looked much traditional nurses: it featured a white skirt and cap at a time in which, except for military parade occasions, the Army Nurse Corps had switched from white to dark fabric and from skirts to pants. The student uniform, however, was designed not so much for working practicality as to reassure parents and to inspire historic patriotism.

Recruiting posters depicted young women in these uniforms with text messages such "A Lifetime Education Free for High School Graduates who Qualify—U.S. Cadet Nurse Corps." Another, which was issued by the Office of War Information in 1944, not only reinforced the self-interested message above, but went further to imply that a young woman must hurry or lose her chance. It read, "Join the U.S.

Cadet Nurse Corps—Only 5,416 Opportunities to Enlist this Month—A Lifetime Education in a Proud Profession." Recruitment nonetheless continued as the war wound down in 1945: then the Veterans Administration issued posters depicting nurses caring for young men in VA hospitals, some of whom would have to live permanently with their injuries.

Washington officials in charge of the corps also coordinated closely with state departments of education. They used the Department of Education's periodical, *Education for Victory*, to make school administrators, guidance counselors, and teachers aware of the issues. They sent speakers to talk to teenage girls about nursing school, organized events to encourage enrollment, and even reached out to minorities, including Japanese Americans. Ultimately, some 120,000 women benefited from the Bolton Act, many of whom also donned the uniform of the Cadet Nurse Corps. The program indeed was historic: never before had the federal government invested so much to encourage education expressly designed for female students.

*See also:* African-American women; American Nurses' Association; Army Nurse Corps; Bataan; Bolton Bill; Corregidor; Japanese-American women; Navy Nurse Corps; nurses; Red Cross; uniforms

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### CAMP FOLLOWERS

Since the nation began with the American Revolution, this term has been used to denote women who followed men to military camps. Often the intent is tainted with slander, implying that they are prostitutes or at least women of questionable morals. That this should not necessarily be the case is clear when we recall that Martha Washington and other leading ladies of early American history accompanied their

men to camp, especially in the winter. Like other women, Washington returned to Mount Vernon to supervise the busy agricultural summer, but she shared her husband's dark days at Valley Forge.

Despite the fact that the nation's founders clearly appreciated female presence, military science in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries accepted as dogma that camp followers were a damaging influence. In World War II, as in earlier wars, most officials resisted allowing civilian women anywhere near military posts, whatever their relationship to a soldier might be. Leaders feared, often with justification, that especially drafted men would prioritize their wives or sweethearts ahead of military duty.

Other authority figures reinforced the military's view. Physician Leslie B. Hohman, for instance, titled one of his monthly columns for *Ladies Home Journal*, "Don't Follow Your Husband to Camp." Most male sociologists, ministers, and so forth also urged women to stay home, rarely considering the possibility that having a wife nearby might stabilize a young man, make him work harder, and keep him away from negative influences.

Because almost all local leaders echoed the military opinion, many residents near military installations treated women who followed their husbands to camp with open hostility. Many such locales already were overcrowded, as, for instance, the Navy placed new training bases on coasts jammed with bustling shipyards. Airfields also were likely to be on the coasts or in the South, where warm weather allowed year-round flying.

Coastal cities were accustomed to newcomers and less hostile, but despite legendary hospitality, many residents of small Southern towns could be decidedly rude to the young Yankee women who suddenly appeared by the hundreds in insular Alabama or South Carolina. This was especially so when local military commanders all but officially declared such women to be a public nuisance.

Nonetheless, hundreds of thousands of women defiantly endured difficult travel and uncomfortable lifestyles so that they could be with their men during what might turn out to be the last months of his life. Some local women, especially those with children in the service, quietly differed from the official advice and empathized with camp followers. Barbara Klaw, for example, followed her husband from their New York City home to Neosha, Missouri: she said that although the male USO head there declared that "Army wives frankly were a bother," the YWCA workers "strongly defended, brooded over and mothered" the young women. "All day long," Klaw continued:

girls climbed the steep hill to Neosha's magnificent U.S.O. club ... We didn't jam the rooms as soldiers did at night, but we used every facility constantly. By the time my daily shift at the reception desk started at five o'clock, the little meter that recorded the number of people entering the building usually read about 200, few of whom by that time of day had been soldiers.

These women used the ironing boards, sewing machines,

and other things not available to them in the rented rooms of Neosha homes that they were lucky to find. In similar towns throughout the nation, young women begged to rent an attic space or a portion of a garage or basement so that they could be near their man. Such rentals rarely came with private bathrooms, and Klaw said that camp followers also depended on the USO for that. During "two hours every morning," men were banned from the building's basement showers so that "girls who lived in unequipped homes" could use the facilities.

It is understandable that homes in Missouri's Ozarks did not yet have modern showers, but many landladies there and elsewhere failed to be hospitable in other ways. There were, of course, exceptions, but most local residents seemed to think that the military's unwelcome attitude toward camp followers justified hostility and exploitation. They charged unconscionable rent for barely habitable housing, refused to allow cooking or even coffeepots in rooms, forbade the use of the family telephone, and even doled out toilet paper by the sheet.

Nor could young couples expect any real privacy in these rooms during the few hours that they could be together. Soldiers had to be in their barracks at lights-out, and the only time that husbands and wives could spend together was in the evening—when the men often had to study for the next day's classes. Whether or not a soldier got a weekend pass depended on the whim of his sergeant, and even if he did, gas rationing meant that couples rarely could go anywhere or do anything beyond the limited choice of a small town's jammed movie theater or overpriced cafe.

Unmarried soldiers also found such stations difficult, as one described these "Armytowns" to *New Republic*:

There's only two kinds of girls in Armytown ... soldiers' wives or anybody's gals .. Every time I come into town I start to ask myself whatinhell I did it for ... Some fellas wandering up and down; a few with their gals—the lucky ones—but mostly they've got the paintbrush ready only there's nothing to paint.

Nothing, too, was the situation with employment, as very few employers were willing to hire a woman they knew soon would move. Although many camp followers had work experience and although there was a genuine national labor shortage, it was extremely difficult for these women to work, especially given the difficulties of wartime transportation. The most likely employment in such places were service jobs—but they often came with a reputation too tainted for the moral code of the place and time: writer Gretta Palmer, for instance, reported that "Travelers Aid was unable to find a room in any respectable home of a large town for a soldier's wife with a waitress job."

Unless a couple had parents capable of subsidizing this point in their young lives, camp followers faced a penny-pinching existence on the monthly \$50 that most soldiers earned. *Ladies Home Journal* wrote of the thirty thousand women who accompanied men to San Antonio airfields in 1943. "The days are very empty," the magazine said of a



representative woman, with her unwanted leisure enlivened only by “a radio in her room” and occasional movies. The bus ride to her husband’s base was too complex and expensive for weekday evenings, and she lived only for the weekends when he could visit.

Another of these San Antonio women, “June,” was fortunate enough to find a job, but she faced a complicated future that was impossible to plan:

When Bob’s Pre-flight nine weeks are up, he goes on two days’ notice to a second nine-week tour at some Primary Training field. There is none near San Antonio, so June will have to decide whether to go along or stick to her present job in hopes that...the third nine weeks will bring him back to near-by Randolph Field. Advanced Training means still another shift.

Pilots such as her husband received exceptionally long training; many soldiers were stationed at just two U.S. locations, one for basic training and another for specialized training, before they went on to the real war. Sometimes, though, Uncle Sam changed his mind about a man’s abilities and decided to retrain him or use him to train others or still another circumstance intervened so that he served at several U.S. posts. This was the experience of an Illinois couple, as writer Elizabeth Janeway explained of newlyweds Bill and Dee. They lived with her family while awaiting his call to duty and after their first child was born:

Dee began to move. First Tennessee. Then Santa Ana, then Tucson ... Then Lemoore, California; Stockton, California; and Albuquerque. Diane was born there. Bill was able to be with Dee until a month before Dianne arrived. He went to El Paso then ... Although Dee had a pretty bad time with Dianne—four transfusions—she insisted on getting down to Bill. Her mother drove ...

With such frequent moves, she had an extremely difficult time creating even a makeshift family life, but Dee had no regrets. When her husband died at age 24, these transient homes would be the only ones she could cherish. The young widow calmly encouraged other women to do what she had done: defy authorities and stay together as long as possible.

When the military draft was first imposed, only unmarried men were called, but that soon expanded to married men without children and then to fathers. Individual decisions were made by local draft boards and could be arbitrary, but by the end of the war, it was not uncommon for men with three or more children to be drafted. Nor could they routinely come home when their families were under stress: an Arkansas man assigned to Alaska, for instance, was not allowed to attend his child’s funeral.

Women with multiple children, however, rarely became camp followers: the expense and difficulty of travel simply was too great. The best scenario for a camp-following woman was to be childless and to have her husband stationed near a large city where she might find employment. This was more likely in the Navy than in the Army, but sailors’ wives nonetheless faced difficulties.

Navy wives intent on joining husbands at ports such as San Francisco and San Diego or, on the East Coast, New York and Philadelphia, arrived to find that hotel rooms were not available at any price. They slept on lobby chairs and endlessly dialed pay phones to find a place to stay. Once they did, some were reluctant to let it go and stayed “in camp” even after their husbands shipped out.

A woman whose husband was assigned to a San Francisco-based submarine explained: “A friend of mine went home ... and she’d no sooner left than her husband got in with forty-eight hours leave ... and [at Christmas], she missed him again. I’m staying right here.” Many of these women worked in the defense plants that dotted southern California; they saved the money they earned and prepared to create a permanent home when their husbands finally returned at the war’s end.

This was much less possible for the more numerous women whose husbands were in the Army’s giant infantry and artillery divisions or in the Army Air Force’s bombing and fighter-plane units. (Today’s Air Force was not yet a separate entity.) Training for these skills rarely could be done near cities, and no government agency was imaginative enough to think through a method that might have taken advantage of the willing labor of their stranded wives.

No one wanted the war to be over more than they, and these women might have, for instance, learned to pack parachutes or assembled electronic gear. Similarly, although quotas for the Women’s Army Corps routinely went unfilled, no one conceived of taking this body of potential recruits and sending them to classes on the same posts as their men to train them for military paperwork jobs that they could have performed even after their husbands went overseas.

This inability to use their abilities especially bothered educated women, but most soon accepted the reality that for the duration of their husbands’ time in the U.S., their priority was to be a wife. They learned to ignore media accusations of selfishness and did what their hearts told them was right. Camp follower Helen Sweedy retorted to those who told women to stay home and work in the *New York Times Magazine*: “When he’s sent over, I’ll go back and get a job. But until that happens, I’m going where he goes.”

As the war wore on and people began to know camp followers personally, the initial hostility began to fade. By autumn of 1944, *American Home* even chastised readers who had failed to welcome these young women: “We open our homes to the men in service and ask them to dinner with the family—let’s do as much for the homesick women.” It quoted a volunteer who had discovered the numbers of such women to be so large that she declared, “No sailors, no soldiers, WACs or WAVES for my war work. I’ve picked the WIVES.”

A landlady in Twenty-Nine Palms, California, similarly learned that her prejudice was wrong. She initially refused to rent to “cadet wives” and was amazed when she finally did, saying “they scrubbed and waxed floors, doing a better job than I could.” Even the military began to show some signs of change by 1944, when *Business Week* reported that

## CAMP FOLLOWERS

the Army Air Force and the Navy had “relented” and leased two “swank” hotels in Miami Beach for the use of wives who wanted to stay near their pilot husbands, men were returning from overseas to train on new planes.

This opportunity, of course, was only open to an elite few, and most women during most of the war managed entirely on their own, without any sort of support network. Social worker Phyllis Blough was one of the few who saw this neglect for unthoughtful policy that it was:

Of all the groups of women involved in the war, the servicemen’s wives have been the most inchoate. There was no ... uniform which would give them a feeling of group unity ... Sitting up all night on trains, on buses, hushing fretful babies, carrying bags with bottles and diapers, and clutching the older children ... these tired young women were simply trying to maintain their family life as long as they could ...

The wife of the man in uniform has had to fend for herself, make her own decisions ... The growing ability of women to find and assimilate new experience has, during the war years, been unhappily associated with material discomfort and emotional stress.

This brilliant analysis not only summarized the hardships that camp followers faced, but also foreshadowed implications for the future. First, it was reasonable to expect that women who had endured so much might retreat during the immediate postwar years into a secure home with a husband to help meet its daily burdens: it was not surprising that for a few years after the war, women would want to simply stay home. Ultimately, however, their wartime difficulties had been a tremendous learning experience that inevitably created both world-awareness and personal self-confidence. Although many days indeed were dreary, in the long term, camp followers benefited from their travel and their introduction to new places and people. Along with their men, millions of them decided not to return to Nebraska or Kentucky; they stayed in Florida or California and permanently changed the national scene.

**See also: childhood; courtship; defense industries; draft; housing; landladies; marriage; prostitution; travel; USO; weddings; widows; wives of servicemen; YWCA**

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## CARAWAY, HATTIE WYATT (1878—1950)

The first woman elected to the U.S. Senate, Hattie Caraway of Arkansas also was the first congresswoman to co-sponsor the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. Her wartime role, however, was cut short when she lost her 1944 reelection.

Caraway had been a conventional politician’s wife, dividing her time between Washington, D.C. and Jonesboro, Arkansas, after her husband was elected to Congress in 1912. When he died in 1931, the state’s governor appointed her to replace him, with politicians assuming that she would step aside in the 1932 election. Instead, while setting a precedent as the first woman to preside over the Senate, she also announced her candidacy.

A Democrat like virtually all southerners in that era, Caraway surprised pundits by defeating a half-dozen men, including a former governor and a former U.S. senator. Many believed that she owed her victory to campaign help from Louisiana Senator Huey Long, but Caraway again demonstrated her individual attractiveness to voters in 1938, when she defeated a powerful House member, John McClellan.

It was women and veterans of World War I who made up the greatest bloc of Caraway supporters. Veterans were grateful for her support of them during the Great Depression, and she also worked for New Deal programs that especially benefited women and farm families. Although she seldom spoke in congressional debate or otherwise drew attention to herself, Senator Caraway faithfully followed the Roosevelt administration’s progressive agenda, including the internationalism that became necessary as fascists took over in Europe and Asia.

During most of her tenure, she was the only woman in the Senate. She was the first woman to chair a Senate committee—but it was not a significant one, nor can she be credited with as much wartime legislation as some female members of the House. Perhaps it was the differing nature of those two bodies or perhaps she feared her status as the sole female senator would make her an easy target or perhaps it was simply her excessive modesty, but Caraway did not

achieve the power of, for example, fellow Democrat Mary T. Norton, who chaired the House Labor Committee when labor was a vital issue. Even though they belonged to the Republican minority, Frances Bolton led the House on wartime nursing issues, while Edith Nourse Rogers championed the Women's Army Corps (WAC) and Margaret Chase Smith did the same for the WAVES.

All of those women were from the Northeast, however, and they rarely reached out to Arkansan Caraway. At the same time, she did not avail herself of opportunities to visit her voters as much as she might have. Perhaps she was more conscientious than other politicians about respecting the rationing of gas and tires or adding to the millions of train travelers, but Caraway was not present when, for one example, Private Helen G. Kent was honored at a WAC ceremony in Arkansas. This lack of visibility with her constituents may have been the primary reason that she lost the 1944 election to University of Arkansas president William Fulbright, an even more liberal Democrat.

President Franklin Roosevelt appointed Caraway to the Federal Employees Compensation Commission early in 1945, and she lived in Washington, D.C., until her death five years later. Despite a matronly appearance and personal diffidence that caused even feminists to take her less than seriously, Hattie Caraway demonstrated superlative political skills in winning major elections in the most unlikely of places and times.

*See also Bolton, Frances; Equal Rights Amendment; Norton, Mary T.; Rogers, Edith Nourse; Smith, Margaret Chase; WAVES; Women's Army Corps*

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## CENSORSHIP AND SECRECY

Censoring what citizens say to each other is a classic sign of fascism, but a certain amount of it was necessary in World War II to protect the lives of those who fought against fascist governments that had conquered other nations in both Asia and Europe. American censorship worked in both directions: letters to and from both civilians and soldiers could be read and parts of it that might cause military harm were blackened out. Very few Americans objected; most did their best to cooperate with the rules.

In return, censors limited their interest to what might matter militarily. They ignored the highly personal, often romantic paragraphs that many women nonetheless wrote, even though they knew that a stranger could read their intimacies. The military dropped censorship on many issues as soon as the battle was over or the threat was past, and

censorship ended completely a few days prior to the formal Japanese surrender.

Although they censored letters, military officials certainly did want civilians to write frequently to those in the service. Advertising campaigns, especially in the form of posters, urged the public to help maintain morale by sending letters. In addition to caring that people wrote, however, the military also cared what they wrote. A *Good Housekeeping* article early in the war interpreted the rules:

Don't identify by name or location factories and facilities engaged in war work. In particular, don't describe new plants.... Don't tell where a war factory is shipping new products ...

Don't identify the country where your soldier is stationed. That's why you address mail for overseas delivery to an Army Post Office ("APO" number) in the United States. Keep the geography anonymous. Don't inquire about the Scottish language or the Egyptian climate. Don't identify the unit or branch of service of friends.

Don't write detailed reports of the weather over here... Last summer hundreds of letters in the overseas mail were held up while the censors deleted accounts of towns isolated and power plants put out of commission by a storm in the South.

Don't write letters in private codes, jargon, shorthand. Yes, it's all in fun. But the censor doesn't take chances.

Don't repeat rumors and "inside stories." ... Don't be abusive about the government, the Army, or our allies.

Although this might sound draconian, in fact few letters got their writers into any serious trouble in that way that rule violations would under a truly fascist government. Most rules were sensible, and the usual penalty was mere delay while the censor blacked out the portion that should not have been written. The reasoning behind this, of course, was that if the plane should crash or the ship be sunk or the mail truck hit with a grenade, information that survived in a mail bag could be helpful to an enemy seeking vulnerabilities.

In a time before email and cell phones, the U.S. mail was the only realistic way to communicate with soldiers, as even the telephone and telegraph rarely were possible overseas. As the *Good Housekeeping* article explained, all mail was addressed to the soldier with his rank and service number, and it went to an APO in either New York or San Francisco. The latter was used for the Pacific Theater of Operations, while the New York APO might be either the European or Middle Eastern Theaters. Overseas sorters then tracked down the individual recipient through his (or less often, her) unit number.

Many women worked as sorters and censors, handling massive amounts of mail. Already a year prior to D-Day and well before the war's most serious stages, some twenty million pieces of mail went overseas each week. Some was newspapers, parcels, and other such, but enough people—mostly women—wrote personal letters to soldiers that they received an average of fourteen pieces of mail per week. "Mail is so important to troops," *Time* reported "that a shipment is included on every ship and available plane leaving the U.S."





The gold star, the sailor's collar, and the sad dog convey the seriousness of censorship. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

With such a staggering work load, not every word of every letter hit the censor's eye, but random samples were frequent enough that both civilians and military members were likely to receive letters with words blacked out. Censorship within the military, of course, was even more strict. Especially when ships with thousands of troops aboard were about to depart, there was a complete blackout on mail, phone calls, or any personal movements that might let enemy agents know of the sailing. German submarines lurked offshore, and so even in their waiting areas, the censorship lesson was reinforced: the first members of the Women's Army Corps (WAC) sent to England saw bathroom mirrors in their quarters that were emblazoned with, "If you talk, this woman may die." According to writer Doris Fleenor:

Telephoning, even by officers, is out ... So far as his family is concerned, the soldier has already left America ... One girl learned that her mother had died. A lieutenant received a letter from her soldier fiancé whom she had not seen in a year and a half. He was on leave in a near-by city and wanted her to call him. She couldn't. Another WAC heard that her brother-in-law had ... critically wounded her sister and killed their baby. Her company commander soothed her as best she could—but there was no break in the embarkation blackout.

Opposite orders applied when a soldier knew that he or

she was about to be shipped out but was not yet restricted to quarters. Soldiers then were warned not to break dates, lest this be seen as an indication of an imminent sailing. The result was hurt feelings and confused emotions when the soldiers failed to appear for the date—and weeks or months could pass before a letter might explain. One newlywed, for instance, spoke of her husband to *Ladies Home Journal*: "I don't even know where he is except that he sailed from an Atlantic port and the Army issued tropical clothing ... It's nearly two months ... and I haven't had a word."

Another woman believed her husband to still be in the United States, probably in Miami, but a series of frantic notes there had no response. Margaret Wilder wrote:

If there isn't a letter or wire when I get home this afternoon I'll phone you ... In case I can't reach you, though, before this does, wire me the instant you get it. I don't care if you're not supposed to talk, you can at least say "yes" or "no..."

Oh, where are you? The operator tried to get me a line for three hours this evening, and when she finally did reach the hotel all they could say was that you hadn't left any forwarding address, that they were under the impression you were just moving on orders...

Still no word from you ... Thank heavens it's Saturday so I can stay near the phone ... I'm trying to keep it from getting too grim for the kids ...

I can't believe it ... I keep thinking how terrible those last few minutes must have been for you,... being ordered directly to the point of embarkation—and knowing you wouldn't be allowed to communicate ... That it had to come so suddenly, without ... one last Christmas together, is the worst part.

Some people, of course, tried to use the time before departure to invent private ways of passing information. The most frustrating thing, of course, was not knowing where on the globe a loved one was, and some couples devised methods to impart that news before sailing. Perhaps the most frequent way was a prearranged sign underneath the postage stamp, but even that very often could not reveal much: usually the sender did not know where he or she was headed until the announcement was made after the ship was at sea. Sometimes even that information failed to appear for long periods. When Alene Duerk, for example, sailed from New York in 1945, she knew that she was going to the Pacific Theater only after the ship crossed the Panama Canal.

She was a member of the Navy Nurse Corps and, of course, would work as a nurse onboard, but some Pacific-bound WACs were assigned to spend their sailing time censoring letters written by the thousands of others onboard. Martha Alice Wayman was one of those, yet even she seemed confused about exactly what information was allowable. According to *We're in This War, Too*, a collection of women's letters, Wayman asked her mother from Australia in 1944: "Has anything been cut out of my letters? After I write something, I find out that we aren't supposed to say that. Everywhere we go they change their minds about what we can say."

WAC Selene Wiese expressed similar ambivalence. As a Signal Corps cryptographer, she certainly understood secrecy,



but she nonetheless tried to send home an indication that she had been in Australia. In a January 5, 1945, letter from the obscurely-defined “Netherlands, East Indies,” she asked about souvenirs she had mailed: “Was there an Aussie penny in the box? I sent one but I’m afraid the censor took it out.” Later, when Wiese was in Manila, she wrote: “The censor isn’t going to appreciate the length of this letter, but I guess that’s tough.” Perhaps because of that length or—more likely—because victory was at hand, the censor did not strike details in this letter that probably should have been deleted, including a reference to a dam still held by the Japanese.

Army nurse Lillie Emory Skinner served in the European Theater of Operations (ETO), while her husband, a dentist, was in the Pacific Theater of Operations (PTO). They were separated for two years, but she found that their letters were delivered surprisingly well, despite that fact that both were constantly on the move following battle lines. “We weren’t supposed to tell our locations,” she later said to author Diane Burke Fessler, “so we tried to use codes. The censor who checked his letters wrote a note that said, ‘your husband loves you, but he talks too much.’”

This was a highly unusual incident, but a bit of levity probably helped with the frustration of knowing that someone was eavesdropping on every intimate word. As a combat nurse, she—and many other women—understood that censorship was helpful to the military and therefore to their loved ones. They found a degree of comfort in this enforced ignorance, in being excused from worrying about action in a specific place. When they watched a war news reel at their local theater, for example, it was better to have no reason to believe that their loved one was involved.

More important, their personal letters were far from the only things censored. That news reel, too, had been censored before it was shown and probably was no longer new. Media censorship occurred on a very broad scale, as even when reporters knew of an action, they were not allowed to share the information until military censors approved. The military, for example, kept secret the torpedoing of ships and the annihilation of aircraft because telling of such also would tell the enemy which of its methods was successful. Often the news of a sinking ship, with hundreds of lives lost, was not acknowledged until months after the sailors had gone to their watery graves. A woman did not know if the cessation of letters from her husband meant a simple delivery difficulty or if in fact she was a widow—nor could she expect the media to tell her.

Occasionally things could occur that even those potentially affected did not know of because it wasn’t reported. Anna Steele Fox, for example, was a psychiatric nurse stationed in England. According to Fessler, the army hospital where Fox served was in Sweden,

about seventy miles from London and was right across from a camp for German prisoners ... One night we were told not to go anywhere, even the bathroom, without a corpsman standing by ... Later my mother sent a clipping from the *Chicago Tribune* telling that prisoners at that camp had

planned to make a break and take females as hostages. We didn’t know anything about that until my mother sent the clipping.

It was unusual that the plot was reported at all; one possible factor may have been that the *Chicago Tribune* was rabidly anti-Roosevelt and may have run the story to make the administration appear to be reckless with women’s lives. Most newspapers printed nothing at all on this and many other incidents—and thus, on the larger historical level, the result was that heroic actions by women went unknown. Because censorship meant that they were not publicized at the time, brave women of World War II were nearly forgotten until feminist historians recently began to bring them to public attention.

Perhaps the best examples of this may be the Red Cross women who were torpedoed on the *Maasdam* early in the war and the flight nurses who escaped from Albania near its end. The same is true of fatalities in the WASP and the WAC, especially plane crashes in the Pacific and North Africa. Military censors understandably did not want the enemy to know of these losses, and the effect was that the public did not know of them either. When the war ended and their stories could be told, the public was ready to forget—before it even knew.

*See also:* **cryptography; European Theater of Operation; fatalities; flight nurses; intelligence, military; letter writing; Massdam; Navy Nurse Corps; North Africa; Pacific Theater of Operation; wives of servicemen; Women’s Army Corps**

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### CHIANG KAI-SHEK, MADAME (1897–2003) (SOONG MEI-LING, ALSO SPELLED MAYLING)

Madame Chiang—the name by which her contemporaries knew her—was not an American, but spent much of her



China's Madame Chiang Kai-shek, with House Speaker Sam Rayburn, prepares to address a 1943 joint session of Congress. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

life in the United States and had tremendous influence on American women during World War II. Indeed, she may have had more impact on Westerners than any other Asian woman throughout history. A large part of this is attributable to the fact that she was educated in the United States, as was her sister. Both married powerful men and became China's most prominent women in the decades prior to the war.

Born in Shanghai to Chinese parents who were leaders in its Christian community, Soong Mei-ling followed her older sister, Soong Ch'ing-ling, to Wesleyan Female College in Macon, Georgia. Ch'ing-ling graduated from there in 1913, but Mei-ling left for Massachusetts and graduated from its more elite Wellesley College in 1917. Neither sister thus was in China during its 1911 revolution, when the autocratic Manchu dynasty that had ruled since 1644 was overthrown.

The hero of that revolution was Sun Yet-Sen, and like the Soong sisters, he was an educated Christian who had traveled widely. Although he was much older than she, Ch'ing-ling married Sun soon after her return to China, and she worked with him to democratize the country. His former supporters, however, quarreled over policies and power, and he was ousted. The erstwhile revolutionary forces were deep into civil war when he died in 1925.

One of Sun Yet-sen's first appointments after the 1911 victory had been to name Chiang Kai-shek as China's military chief, and Soong Mei-ling would marry him. When they met, however, she was working for the YWCA, while Chiang was

married to another woman. He divorced in October 1927, wed Mei-ling the next December, and was baptized in her Methodist faith in 1930.

The sisters' paths then diverged along the lines of China's civil war. Widowed Ch'ing-ling would move into the interior with what became the Communist forces, and although she continued her political work until her 1981 death, was not visible to most Westerners. (Agnes Smedley, an American journalist who lived with these revolutionaries, was a rare exception.) In contrast to Ch'ing-ling's growing obscurity, Mei-ling became so visible with her husband's Nationalists that Chiang Kai-shek and Madame Chiang Kai-shek were virtually synonymous.

The Communists and Nationalists temporarily put aside their differences in 1937, after the Japanese devastatingly attacked China's coast. Shanghai, Nanking, the capital of Peking (now Beijing) and other cities fell in rapid succession, with horrifying brutality against civilians. Japanese soldiers routinely raped Chinese women, and—as was also true of Korean women—some were taken to faraway brothels, where their Japanese captors termed them “comfort women.”

Although that information was omitted as too salacious, the American media did give appreciable attention to this early portion of what became World War II—and Madame Chiang soon became China's personification to many Americans. She pulled off a great recruitment coup in 1939, when she persuaded Claire L. Chennault, who headed the Army Air Force between the world wars, to come to China. With other American aviators, Chennault founded the famed “Flying Tigers,” which destroyed an estimated 300 Japanese planes in southeast Asia during the next three years.

In 1940, she published *This Is Our China* and then spent the remainder of the war raising funds for her husband's army—something that became easier when the Japanese attacked Hawaii's Pearl Harbor and the United States entered the war as China's ally late in 1941. By 1943, Madame Chiang was sufficiently popular that she spoke to a joint session of Congress. She was the first Chinese person and the second non-elected woman to do so. (The first had been orator Anna Dickinson during the American Civil War.) First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt wrote of Madame Chiang:

I shall never forget the day I went with her when she addressed the House of Representatives, after meeting the senators. A little, slim figure in Chinese dress, she made a dramatic entrance as she walked down the aisle, surrounded by tall men. She knew it, for she had a keen sense of the dramatic ...

I saw another side of Madame Chiang while she was in the White House ... The men ... were all a little afraid of her, because ... the little velvet hand and the low, gentle voice disguised a determination that could be as hard as steel.

A certain casualness about cruelty emerged sometimes in her conversations with the men, though never with me. I had painted for Franklin such a sweet, gentle and pathetic figure that, as he came to recognize the other side of the lady, it gave him keen pleasure to tease me about my lack of perception.

Madame Chiang stayed at the White House for an extended period and then made a round-trip across the United States on a chartered train with an entourage of forty employees. Indeed, her traveling and speaking schedule often kept her away from Chungking, the interior city where her husband's Nationalist government had its capital. It was understandable that "China's first lady," as she was known in the West, would not care to spend time there: several writers reported it to be the filthiest city they had ever seen.

Among the American women who were there during World War II were future chef Julia Child, then Julia McWilliams and an employee of the Office of Strategy Services; Alice-Leone Moats, a war correspondent for *Collier's* magazine; and Sonia Tomara of the *New York Herald-Tribune*. The widely-traveled Tomara wrote graphically about the Nationalist's capital in 1943. According to author Julia Edwards: "Rain came through the wall of the room she occupied at the press hostel. Rats ate her soap, and mosquitoes formed clouds." Tomara said that she had seen "women and children laughing at the deathbed of a Chinese prostitute in an opium den," and concluded, "nowhere have I been so dirty; nowhere have I walked so much ... over open-air sewers and heaps of garbage."

Two other American journalists took their well-known husbands along on visits to Chungking. Photojournalist Margaret Bourke-White and writer Erskine Caldwell departed from Hong Kong, and she said:

We were taken to the airport at midnight to wait for an unannounced departure time. Since three hours of the flight were made over Japanese-held territory, the take-offs were planned when two layers of cloud would offer the best possible hope ... of being undetected by enemy planes ... We flew in a plane laden with bales of money freshly printed to pay the Chinese soldiers ... We sat on stacks of Chinese dollars ...

A Buick [took] us to the residence of the Generalissimo and Madame Chiang Kai-shek. Their house might have been built for a well-to-do resident of Kansas City ... There was nothing either beautiful or exotic about the house or its furnishings ... But when Madame Chiang Kai-shek entered, it was immediately evident that there was nothing ordinary about her ... The overwhelming impression [was] that here was a person with a will like a stretched steel band.

Martha Gellhorn was not as famous as her husband, Ernest Hemingway, but she may have been the most prescient of any writer who visited Chungking. Her visit was in 1941, when the United States still was officially neutral, yet she saw the future more clearly than those who reported later. "The highlight of the trip" to this "city where lepers abounded," Edwards said, was intended to be "lunch with China's chief of state and his wife, Generalissimo and Madame Chiang Kai-shek." The encounter, a terrible letdown for Gellhorn, convinced her that the Nationalist rulers "cared nothing for the miserable hordes." Gellhorn used even harsher words in her 1959 book, *The Face of War*. In the introduction to the chapter on China she said:

The notion that China was a democracy under the Generalissimo is the sort of joke politicians invent and journalist perpetuate. The local men-in-office, whenever the absence of democracy became embarrassing, explained these conditions by saying that any country, in the midst of a long terrible war, must abandon some of its domestic liberties ... But I do not believe that China ever was a democracy, nor will be, in our lifetime.

Because few reporters emulated Gellhorn's candor, Americans did not understand that the Nationalists had no real concern for "the miserable hordes"—and that this would be a huge factor in their ultimate loss of China. When World War II ended with Japan's 1945 surrender, China's civil war resumed for four more years, until Chiang's Nationalists were forced to retreat from China's massive mainland in 1949. They set up a government on the offshore island then called Formosa, now Taiwan, but despite his obvious military defeat, Chiang was successful in his demand that this government be recognized as the legitimate China. For decades into the future, Madame Chiang continued to rank high on lists of most-admired women; she also received several honorary degrees from American universities.

Chiang Kai-shek continued to call himself president of China until his death in 1975. Madame Chiang then left Taiwan permanently for the United States, where she tried to rally support for an overthrow of mainland China's government. By then, however, few Americans had any appetite for another major war, especially after the misadventure of Vietnam in the 1970s. Her cause faded as she aged, but she lived on in New York City, finally dying there at age 105.

**See also:** Bourke-White, Margaret; Buck, Pearl; Chinese-American women; correspondents, war; Gellhorn, Martha; Hawaii; Pearl Harbor; Roosevelt, Eleanor; Smedley, Agnes

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## CHILD CARE

"On the California coast," said writer Nona Baldwin in 1942, "a tragic group of mothers, widowed overnight by the disaster at Pearl Harbor, have already put their babies in nursery school and taken their places behind desks and in



the assembly lines.” Her story was published in *Independent Woman*, the magazine audience most amenable to the idea of working mothers, especially in the case of widows. In most wartime media, however, the question of child care—something that is hardly controversial today—generated heated headlines.

Both the government and defense industries urged women to take vital jobs in making planes, ships, munitions, and more, but at the same time, traditional objections to working mothers remained firmly in place. *Ladies Home Journal*, for instance, was a progressive voice in this era, but it nonetheless published a 1942 piece by its resident conservative, physician Leslie Hohman, that sincerely queried, “Can Women in War Industry Be Good Mothers?” A year later, a female writer for *American Home* argued that “too many women with families are today defining patriotism as money-making activities outside the home.” By 1944, a male writer for *Woman’s Home Companion* considered children to be so neglected that he suggested a “draft” for mothers to stay home. Other pundits, especially male sociologists, joined him in blaming “the absentee-mother problem” for producing “the most critical juvenile delinquency situation in our entire history.”

These magazines were considered mainstream to liberal; conservative ones, such *Catholic Home* and *Christian Century*, came close to echoing fascist dogma on the question of vocational choice for women. *Hygeia*, a publication for the medical profession, also objected to any institutional child care that would encourage mothers to work. Presumably forgetting about the nurses employed in their own field, it railed against the “propaganda” that recruited women into defense industries, adding: “We are apt to forget that woman has a ... primary function in life—namely the bearing and rearing of children.”

And yet the drumbeat that recruited women into war industries necessarily continued—with advertising that often implied they were lazy and unpatriotic if they did not leave the home for the factory. The contradictions were not resolved, and to this day, the nation has no clear policy that addresses the needs of children of working mothers. Our collective memory also has forgotten some of the creative solutions that were worked out during World War II.

A major difference between the two eras, however, is that today’s profit-making child care center rarely existed then. Mothers were expected to stay home, and in those cases in which a widow or the wife of a disabled man had to work, extended family usually cared for the children. Only in the case of true indigence did a needy woman turn to institutional care, which were charities, not businesses. A mother who used such a nursery (the common word then) was made to feel like the charity case that she was—not a customer or client who must be pleased, as is the case with today’s profit-making child care center.

The Roosevelt administration’s New Deal had begun some nurseries to assist these poorest mothers during the Great Depression. Dr. Grace Langdon was director of child care for the Works Progress Administration (WPA) from its

1933 beginning, and during the next decade, she performed the bureaucratic miracle of creating some two thousand nurseries, with at least one in every state, at a time of great prejudice against using public funds for this. (It was another sort of prejudice that prevented Langdon from reaching out to African-American mothers; although many WPA nurseries were in the South, the children in them were almost exclusively white.)

When the economy improved with the war’s beginning, Langdon’s project was abolished along with the rest of the WPA. In one of the strongest examples of societal failure to think through the realities of women’s lives, these thriving nurseries were closed or transferred to other agencies or otherwise disrupted at exactly the time they were most needed. To some extent, this irony is explained by the image that defense industries tried to project: modern aircraft manufacturers, for example, wanted to be seen as progressive, and that weighed against the depression image that the WPA conveyed. If defense factories were to have institutional child care at all, the personnel managers of such places wanted it to be under their own control. Some followed through with this ambition; more did not.

The need was clear. In the spring of 1942, when the nation had been at war for less than six months, sociologist Beulah Amidon cited a munitions-producing town in the rural South with 156 working mothers of 167 preschoolers—and no facility to care for them. “In Illinois,” she continued, “a survey of only a few blocks disclosed 178 children from one to six years old in need of care.” That autumn, *Saturday Evening Post* offered additional examples of “Eight-Hour Orphans:”

A mother ... carries her baby with her as she goes to her job in a war factory. She meets her husband as he is going home from work and passes the baby to him. This is a solution of sorts.

A twelve-year-old child is locked out of the house all day while her parents are at work.

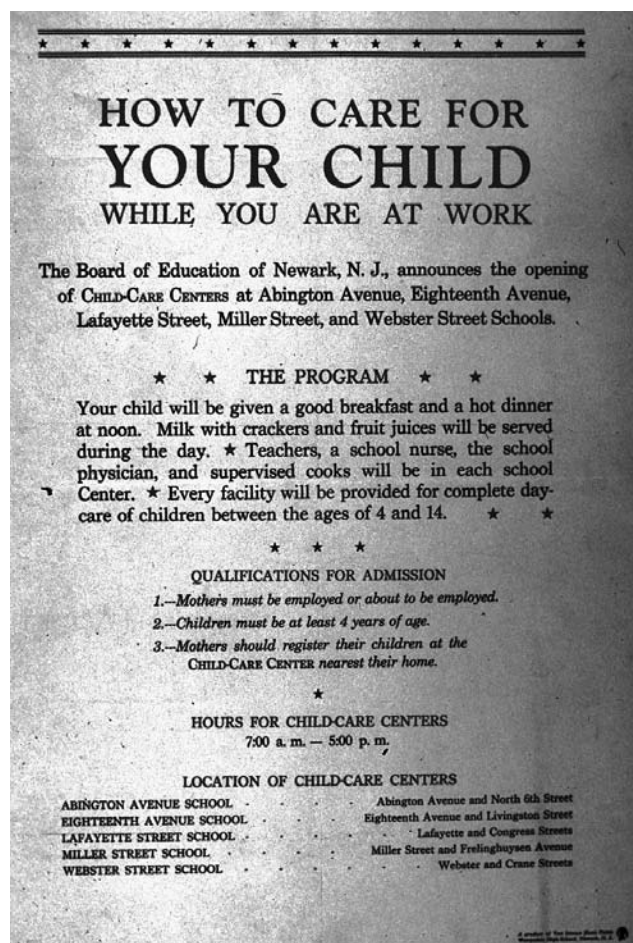
A woman on the graveyard shift drives her car close to the windows of the place where she is employed, and her four children sleep in the automobile.

These are not isolated cases ... You can multiply them and cases similar to them by the thousands. Next year, unless prompt action is taken, you can multiply them by the hundred thousand.

How do these things happen? First, let it be understood that this country has long had a serious child-care problem never adequately met.

Similar need echoed all over the country. Nona Baldwin, writing for the publication of *Business & Professional Women*, added up the stats and concluded that there were “at least 1,600,000 children for somebody to look after. That is an awful lot of children.” Moreover, they needed care at odd hours, as many defense plants ran twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. Business executives further complicated the issue by strongly preferring to hire women in the age group most likely to have children: observers repeatedly noted that applications from older women were ignored,





In an era prior to today's child-care businesses, some school systems, including Newark, provided extended care. *Courtesy of National Archives*

while managers vainly sought a mythical thirty-year-old woman whose children were grown.

Late in 1942, the War Manpower Commission finally developed a "policy" that reinforced this irrationality. Its ambivalent guidelines discouraged the hiring of women with children, even as they recognized that business sought this age group—and that many young mothers needed to work. This was especially true of those whose husbands had been drafted and whose monthly military allotment checks were inadequate for the family's needs. After four introductory sections, however, the commission concluded with:

If any such women are unable to arrange for satisfactory care of their children ... adequate facilities should be provided ... Such facilities should be developed as community projects and not under the auspices of individual employers or employer groups.

The "community projects" phrase placed the burden on volunteers and on local governments, excusing the industries that created the need and earned the profits from government contracts. Most communities simply could not cope, especially wartime boom towns. Childersburg, Alabama, for example, was an impoverished town of 515 when Du

Pont located an ordnance plant there and 21,000 people poured in. Surely Du Pont could have afforded to provide care for the children of these migrant families much more readily than the town's government could, yet the federal government's policy explicitly exempted the corporation from any obligation.

The policy also ended some good beginnings. California's Douglas Aircraft, for example, became the largest private employer of women in the nation during the war, and it had set up a model child care program at its Santa Monica plant. However, according to J. C. Furnas, writing in *Ladies Home Journal*: "Washington is not sympathetic to such a program and hopes that ... local communities can do the job." The "not sympathetic" view was that of the men who replaced Grace Langdon: they were influenced by businesses less progressive than Douglas Aircraft, and their directive excused industry from doing anything more.

Vaguely issuing "hope" as policy inevitably encouraged more talk than action, and the predictable result was that agencies passed responsibility between them. In addition to local and state ones, the overlapping federal jurisdictions included the Day Care Section of the U.S. Office of Defense Health and Welfare Services, the U.S. Office of Education, the Children's Bureau of the Department of Labor, and more. With everyone in charge, no one was in charge; and in 1944, the last full year of the war, planning conferences were still being held and ambivalence still prevailed. J. C. Furnas explored the topic further for *Saturday Evening Post*, saying that "Washington's responsibility for this lunatic gap is plain"—while also blaming the victim by concluding that the need still existed "principally because American women have done little."

Throwing the problem back to "communities" was especially problematic for the struggling boom towns that the war created—even the large ones. The Los Angeles school system made an honest effort: it operated twenty nursery schools by 1943 and planned to open enough to care for two thousand children—but these good intentions still were wholly inadequate for a city that boomed with an additional half-million people in the war's first months. Despite such numbers, it took a very long time for the public to realize how seriously a lack of child care affected women's lives and created absenteeism. Midway through the war, for example, *Business Week* reported that Los Angeles aircraft plants employed 101,000 women—who had some 19,000 children without reliable care. The resultant absenteeism meant that ten fewer bombers were built each month.

On the West Coast, the most imaginative private programs of the war were those in the shipyards operated by Henry J. Kaiser. Kaiser ignored Washington's advice on child care: its nurseries accepted children as young as eighteen months and were open for both day and night shifts. Fees were a reasonable 75 cents a day for the first child and 50 cents for additional ones. In Portland, Oregon, the Kaiser yards featured a new building of fifteen connecting units, each of which held twenty-five children of similar age. A nurse, social worker,

and dietician were present, with a doctor on call. "The Kaiser Child Service Centers," *Architectural Record* proclaimed, "are among the first places where working people, people of average means, have been able to afford good nursery education for their children." Kaiser centers not only cared for children, but also—in an era prior to fast food—offered carry-out meals. Writing for the *Journal of Home Economics*, Miriam Lowenberg hailed the innovation:

A mother can buy the main dish and dessert of her evening meal for her entire family, picking up these when she calls for her child after a day's work. The plan here is to prepare those foods which take a longer cooking period. A menu suggesting other foods which can be prepared quickly to supplement the home service food is furnished to the mother one week in advance. Menus for all meals served to the children at school...are also sent to the mothers a week in advance.

Vallejo, California, at the southern end of Napa Valley, created a model program. According to professional periodical *Education for Victory*, "a thousand children [are] being well cared for from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m., while their mothers are working in war industries ... The Mare Island Navy Yard ... contributed money, materials, and equipment." On the East Coast, Baltimore County may have been the governmental entity that did the best job. Although it supported just eight child care centers, they offered a phenomenal range of creative services to working mothers, including taking children to doctors and dentists; handling laundry pickup and delivery; packing lunches; and even shopping for scarce, rationed items.

Baltimore's thoughtful program also included take-home meals, and surveys showed it was the most popular of its wide-ranging services. This was especially true for women who lived in its Middle River area, which traditionally was so poor that many homes still used cookstoves fueled with wood or coal. Not having to light a fire to cook supper was "a real boon," said home economist Lora Swartz, because in an era before air conditioning, the house became so hot that "sleep was impossible." Avoiding cooking allowed a woman and her children to get a good night's sleep before facing the early hours of a summer shipyard.

Such practicalities appealed to thoughtful business leaders. Especially *Business Week* and *Nation's Business* encouraged innovation and wrote more frequently of the needs of female workers than many women's magazines. Both ran stories about how the British government helped women to balance job and home, pointing out America's failure to follow these models. They saw the future, in which European women, whether employed or not, could assume taxpayer support for rearing the next generation—something that has yet to occur in the United States.

*See also:* advertising; allotments; boom towns; British women; Business & Professional Women; children; defense industries; Langdon, Grace; magazines; recruitment; War Manpower Commission

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## CHILDREN/MOTHERHOOD

At least fifty million people died because of World War II, and at least half of those were civilians. Systems were in place that fairly easily accounted for military casualties, but counting civilian deaths is much more difficult—and among those civilians, it is even harder to ascertain how many were children. Bombs rained indiscriminately from the skies over both Asia and Europe, and cities—not military installations—often were the target. In this worst violence the globe has ever known, it is certain that millions of innocent little ones died.

American children did not see planes strafe their streets or bomb their homes, but the war nonetheless affected them, usually in negative ways. Large amounts of media attention went to the question of the probable effect of this massive violence in the formative years of the next generation—in



contrast to the surprisingly little correlation that has been made since that generation came of age. Only rarely does anyone include World War II in list of negative influences on today's world, but there was a great deal of concern about that at the time.

Life dealt a double blow to these children: those old enough to be aware of the war had been born in the 1930s and already had faced the Great Depression. Then, too, American entrance into the war came in an especially drama way that even children could not escape. According to sociologist Eleanor Boll, this was evident already on Monday after Sunday's bombing of Pearl Harbor:

On December 8, 1941, the children who arrived at school were very much affected personally. They had been subject, during the previous day, to displays of adult emotion such as they had rarely experienced. A major adult crisis left them confused and frightened ...

Father wanted to enlist, or feared being drafted ... Brother went off to war ... Mother rushed into a war job and was always tired and irritable ...

In one ... newspaper, sixty motion-picture theaters advertised war films. Six comic strips dealt with the war and spy rings. Eight cartoons derived their humor from war. The radio timetable offered a nearly continuous succession of war thrillers...

One teacher describes it as a constant "day-before-Christmas-vacation fever," with children becoming increasingly noisy and unruly, unable to concentrate, unable to sit still ...

It was not so much for themselves that children fretted, but rather for the adults in their lives. One psychologist told *New York Times Magazine* that early in the war, children's drawings showed "a lack of manifest fear ... In none of the pictures were children being bombed or killed in any other way. Children draw the war as a business of grown-ups." As time passed, however, and over one million fathers were drafted, this changed, and children who never feared for themselves saw combat with exaggerated realism: "They pit Daddy against Hitler," said writer Ethel Gorham, "Daddy is in every plane that flies, every ship on the seas."

British women had experience with these issues, and Americans read a good deal about that. The royal princesses stayed near London when Germany's Luftwaffe attacked night after night, but East End children were sent to the countryside or overseas, especially to Canada. While they were more secure away from cities—and their mothers were freed to work in defense factories—many of these children developed negative effects, including psychosomatic illnesses and regression to bed-wetting. Americans, less accustomed than the British to even peacetime childhood separation, never really considered evacuating children from dangerous coastlines. This was reinforced when only a few months after U.S. entrance into the war, some British experts changed their position. *Newsweek* reported:

British psychiatrists made wrong predictions about the juvenile mind. They foresaw the Luftwaffe attacks producing thousands of young neurotics. Instead, children stood up



Children participated in most of the war's conservation drives that recycled scarce materials. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

about as well as their elders under actual bombing, while the neuroses occurred much more often among children evacuated from their city homes to safety in the country.

Honesty was the best policy, even with children. Mothers were told not to hide the terror of war from their young; instead, children should be allowed to identify with their soldier-father and to share mother's fears for him. The truly important factor was to create a sense of involvement, a feeling of being in control of one's life, which came from fighting back.

Again, the British experience was helpful: many reported that adolescents were unwilling to stay in the safety of underground shelters during bombing raids; instead, they wanted to help fight fires. Edna Blue, who worked with refugees from continental Europe, said that "without exception" children who were old enough to understand wanted to help win the war. "Many have said they would rather die than return to live under Hitler's domination. This is not child's talk. These children have heard the boots of the Brown Shirts on the pavement in front of their doors."

Nothing in American experience would match that, but the key to rearing secure children clearly was to encourage them to understand democratic principles and participate in preserving them. Children could and did work in drives to recycle scrap metal and newspaper; they could weed and water the victory garden; they could attend rallies for bond drives and save their pennies to invest in war stamps; and they could comprehend the need for other conservation and rationing measures. All of this was reassuring and made them feel proud to do their part.

For refugee children, these things, of course, were no sacrifice at all. One woman who took such a child into her home, for example, said that he was so accustomed to severe

rationing that he passed his individual pat of butter around the table, assuming everyone would share it. More surprisingly, psychologists observed that children who had actually experienced war were less fearful than those who knew it only as an unknown. It certainly was true that refugee children found it easier to understand why father had to fight and mother had to work, while American children were more likely to feel abandoned and to worry that their parents preferred to be away from them.

In any case, it was clear that the most significant thing a parent could do to calm childish terrors was to make war at least somewhat real, instead of a nightmarish abstraction, and especially to clarify the child's role in it. Usually this devolved on the mother, and the media had plenty of advice for her. Just a portion of the titles run by *Parents*, for instance, chronicles wartime concerns. The magazine introduced the topic in 1942 with "Explaining War to Our Children," and "Can the Youngest Take It?" In 1943, the emphasis was on the question of employment, with articles such as February's "War Jobs for Mothers?" and September's "The War Needs Women." Later reality was demonstrated with "Swing-Shift Mothers" and "Living Without Father."

Perhaps the most unexpected advice came from psychologists and educators who insisted that war should be incorporated into play. Madeline Dixon explained, also in *Parents*:

The pre-school child needs to play war at this moment in order to understand and meet war conditions ... This is best when he pools his questions and his ideas and his fears with children of his own age. He shares and finds out: "You know about this too. Children know about this. Children feel this way." And a shared fear is not nearly so dangerous as a bottled-up fear ... But we must keep in mind that every time a child's toy gun kills a Jap or his submarine sinks a Nazi boat, he has impressed on his character ... that the surest way out of difficulty is to destroy the thing you fear.

Experts seemed to credit mothers with tremendous instinctive skills for channeling children into new directions. New rules replaced old ones, as for example, mothers who had taught children to be wary of strangers now told them to implicitly obey the air-raid warden. More troubling than these rule adaptations, though, were questions on the whats and whys of war. In an era before television, most children had little comprehension of deliberate violence. The unreality of adult explanations can be seen in a *Ladies Home Journal* anecdote: after her parents grimly described the horror of war, a little girl responded: "And can women play, too?"

The possibility of women having an equal part in this "play" or any other, in fact, seemed to be a barely repressed fear of many authors, especially men, on wartime change. Some advice-giving articles, in fact, were not so much counsel as complaint about current reality. "Born into families not yet soundly established," cried sociologist Arthur Rautman, "today's babies may always be outsiders:"

They grow up having no contact with men or with the traditional influences of the American home. The day-to-day

routine and leisure-time activities of their mothers resemble more closely those of a single woman ... A definite place must be left in his [a child's] life where a father will fit, so that the child owes his allegiance to a *man*, not to a picture on the mantel.

Exactly what the mother could do about this was left unexplained. Women were keenly aware of the need for fatherly influence, but as writer Barbara Biber said, "men you can invite in to play with your young don't grow on trees." Nor did many pundits look at how widows managed to bring up secure sons or otherwise challenge the assumption that life without a man inevitably left a psychological scar.

Millions of children could expect to live without their fathers for years, however, and there were two distinct stages of adjustment to that. First came first his training time in the United States, when mail was regular, phone calls were possible, and furloughs likely. Furloughs allowed families to rebuild bonds, but because everyone wanted the time to be perfect, they also were laden with tension. Mothers were cautioned not to tell children too far in advance that father was coming, lest the wait seem interminable. The absent father also was likely to face unrealistically high standards from children who had come to believe in his near-godlike status. Ethel Gorham explained:

When her daddy finally did arrive, the reaction was doubly troubling. Poor Daddy—he'd go to the zoo; he fix the dolly; he'd feed the new fishes ... and after about six hours of rapturous admiration ..., Daddy was fit to be tied. The upshot was that the child's feelings were hurt. And so were Daddy's—because who wants to speak sharply when there's so short a time to speak at all?

Women were advised to schedule an open house for husbands on leave, squeezing all invitations from extended family and friends into one event and thereby leave more time to restore the child's old routine. "To have their classmates see their Daddy in uniform will set the children up tremendously," said Juliet Danzinger. "Just having the world, *their* world, see that they actually have a Daddy is a vital experience."

When father went overseas permanently, mother had another careful balancing act. Many needed to work for financial reasons, as military allotments usually were inadequate, and some wanted to work for personal reasons, as well as to simply help win the war. Although much of the public was critical of working mothers, they also were warned of negative effects on children if they spent too much time at home. A *Collier's* article cautioned:

An alarming number of mothers ... have apparently drawn into the shell of their homes and ... are emotionally and socially hibernating. It is easy to do and easy to justify. "Father is away. The kids are my job ..." It looks very pretty and devoted. But it isn't really ... Unconsciously they are asking these little boys and girls to supply every bit of love and companionship they are missing ... A psychiatrist has told me that over and over again in the neurotic people who come to him for help, he gets the same story: "Mother never went out."



Motherhood and the production of the next generation was indeed much more complicated, much less predictable, and certainly much less well-funded than the production of tanks and planes. But while the nation had no doubt about its ability to win a world war, the public largely walked away from child care and other family problems as though they were not only personal, but also incapable of solution. Mothers simply had to find their own way, and pragmatism was their inchoate philosophy. They handled each crisis as it appeared, and while it was true that the war ripped some families apart, it also was true that its tragedies brought some closer together.

Ties between mother and child especially were likely to be strengthened by their shared wartime experience, and sometimes they never again would be a whole family in the traditional sense. For that possibility, too, a woman had to prepare herself and her child. If death was difficult for adults to resolve, how much harder it was for children who did not fully understand the concept of death or of Daddy, who may indeed have been, in the childish mind, largely a picture on a mantel. Especially when there was no body and no funeral, it could be very hard to acknowledge that a death had happened. A widow featured by *Life* could not bring herself to tell her two children that their father would not be coming home, allowing the boy to develop a morass of confusion. "For weeks after we had received the War's Department message," she related,

Jimmy kept posting his letters in our front porch mailbox and almost every day he would ask Mr. Kaufman, our mailman, when he was going to bring us a letter.

When V-E Day came, Jimmy wanted to know, "Isn't Daddy coming home now?" I told him his daddy had been hurt and had gone to heaven. Not long afterward I was telling a friend how Shel had been killed at Aachen by German artillery fire. I didn't know Jimmy was standing behind my chair ...

"Now that Daddy is in heaven," he said defiantly, "the Germans can't kill him."

**See also: British women; bond drives; child care; conservation; fatalities; Pearl Harbor; rationing; V-E Day; victory gardens; widows; wives of servicemen**

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### CHILD, JULIA MCWILLIAMS (1912–2004)

The famous "French chef" actually was an American who became interested in food as a result of her World War II experience. Julia McWilliams was another of the many talented women who found only limited opportunities during their Depression-era youth, but whose horizons expanded with the war.

Born in Pasadena, California, to a family that included such illustrious ancestors as the *Mayflower's* Priscilla Alden, McWilliams went east to Massachusetts' elite women's Smith College. She graduated in 1938, and although she worked briefly in New York City, neither the times nor her upper-class upbringing encouraged thought of a genuine career, and she returned to a leisurely life in California.

Because of its proximity to Hawaii, the effect of Pearl Harbor perhaps was stronger there than in any other state, and it had a sobering effect on McWilliams. She volunteered for the local Red Cross and worked as an airplane spotter, one of the tasks that fell under the aegis of the Office of Civil Defense. Neither of these were enough for an intelligent woman who was free to travel, however, and when Congress created the WAVES in 1942, McWilliams went to Washington, D.C., and attempted to join—but was rejected because she was two inches taller than the six-foot maximum.

Unable to get into the WAVES, McWilliams became one of Washington's countless "government girls," working as one of many civilian women employed by Office of War Information (OWI). Although her office was at a prestigious Pennsylvania Avenue address, McWilliams's OWI job consisted of endlessly typing names and addresses into card files. Friends told her about more appealing work with the newly-created Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the



Future famed chef Julia Child was Julia McWilliams when this photo was taken, working as a civilian employee of the Office of Strategic Services. *Courtesy of Schlesinger Library; Radcliffe Institute; Harvard University*

forerunner of today's Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and she successfully applied there.

Like most women, she began as a clerk-typist, but soon was promoted to senior clerk and charged with organizing information, almost all of it secret. When she heard that the OSS was sending personnel to India and China in 1943, McWilliams enthusiastically volunteered. In February 1944, she departed on a troop train from Virginia's busy naval center of Newport News bound for Long Beach, California. She and eight other OSS women underwent brief orientation there, before departing for the Pacific Theater of Operations on a ship crowded with some three thousand men.

After brief stops in Australia and India, McWilliams was assigned to the British colony that then was called Ceylon, and now is Sri Lanka, in the Indian Ocean. The women took another troop train from its capital of Colombo to Kandy, where they lived in a pleasant, if old, hotel. Their work offices, however, were in huts on a tea plantation where British commander Lord Louis Mountbatten had his headquarters. Again, McWilliams' assignment was primarily that of a file clerk—but the information that she handled was highly classified, dealing with planned guerilla attacks on Japanese forces in southeast Asia. As in virtually all other cases, these women proved exceptionally adept at keeping military secrets and following censorship rules.

The year 1944 was the turning point in the Pacific, as the Japanese were forced further north toward their home

islands. By March of 1945, enough territory had been won in the tough fighting on the India-Burma-China lines that McWilliams' unit was transferred to mainland China. She first was assigned to Kunming, deep in China's interior, and then to nearby Chungking, which the Nationalist Chinese government-in-exile was using as its capital. To reach there, she flew from Calcutta, and like the era's flight nurses, endured the dangers of crossing the high Himalaya Mountains in an unpressured plane.

Again she set up a system for filing classified information, and this time there was the added difficulty of dealing with Chinese informants who were united against the Japanese, but highly suspicious of each other. For the Chinese, World War II was a relatively brief interruption of the long civil war between Communists and Nationalists—with the latter much influenced by Madame Chiang Kai-shek, a graduate of Massachusetts' Wellesley College.

McWilliams had met American Paul Child in Kandy, and when they both were transferred to China, their relationship deepened. She had never cooked, but he was knowledgeable about both its theory and practice. Much later, she recorded her war experience with the Arlington, Virginia headquarters of Women In Military Service to America, Inc., Child said:

We always talked a great deal about food, particularly in China, because there was a plague going on, and we couldn't eat the Chinese food. We had to eat the terrible Army food: rice, potatoes, canned tomatoes, and water buffalo. We would sit around and talk about the wonderful meals we remembered.

The war ended in September 1945, and after returning to the United States, they married in 1946. At thirty-four, she was older than most brides, and yet her life had barely begun.

Paul continued with the Foreign Service—an opportunity rarely open to women and especially not to married women—but Julia benefited from that when he was assigned to Paris in 1948. She enrolled at the renowned Cordon Bleu cooking school, and with two female friends, opened *L'Ecole des Trois Groumandes* in 1951. A decade later, they published *Mastering the Art of French Cooking* (1961).

The Childs returned to the United States in 1961, and Julia did such an outstanding job of publicizing the new book that she began a Boston television show, *The French Chef*, in 1963. Immensely popular from the beginning, the show soon won an Emmy and national syndication. Child went on to write more books on more kinds of food, including American, and was regularly featured in the Sunday news magazine *Parade*. She was perhaps the leading American to bring recognition to the multi-layered topic of international food, a fundamental factor in human evolution that traditionally has been relegated to women and ignored by historians.

A friendly, open person who encouraged the democratization of *haute cuisine*, Julia Child's large culinary collection is preserved in Cambridge, Massachusetts, at Radcliffe Institute's Schlesinger Library.

See also: **censorship/secretcy; Civil Defense; Chiang, Madame Kai-shek; “government girls”; McAfee, Mildred; Office of War Information; spies; Pacific Theater of Operation; Pearl Harbor; Red Cross; travel; WAVES**

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## CHINESE-AMERICAN WOMEN

To understand the position of Chinese-American women in World War II, it is important to realize that their role in American life not only was numerically small, but also that their brief history in the United States was one of unusual isolation. Cultural barriers imposed by both Chinese and American societies were so great that it was a truly exceptional woman who could overcome the obstacles to participate the war effort—but some did.

Asians were extremely rare in the United States until 1854, when approximately thirteen thousand Chinese men were brought to the West Coast as contract laborers for construction of the nation's first continental railroad. Many of those men returned to China when their work was done, and Chinese immigration remained small—and the proportion of women among them was very small. The 1870 census showed just over sixty thousand Chinese Americans, with fewer than five thousand of them being women, and this less-than-10 percent ratio continued for years.

Worse, most of these women were prostitutes. San Francisco, which would become the center of Chinese-American culture, is indicative: in 1870, it had 1,769 Chinese women, of whom 1,452 were listed as prostitutes. Imported by the same business interests that brought Chinese men, they lived under similar conditions of contract labor and indentured servitude. Many had been sold into this indentured status by their families, and they were taken to the railroad and mining camps where Chinese men toiled. Very few operated independently; instead they were controlled much like slaves; their cubicle-like homes were described in the era's literature as “cribs.”

It was primarily reformers in the East who pressured Congress into holding 1875 hearings on this—and on polygamy,

female infanticide, and similar issues. Western community leaders went to Washington, D.C., and testified about situations that shocked Congressmen, and the result was first federal law against the sales or importation of females for immoral purposes. As with other the era's well-intended reform efforts, of course, this protectionist legislation also had the effect of hampering the free movement of women—but in the case of Chinese women, freedom was more an abstraction than a reality.

Many of these women died, especially of venereal diseases, but some survived their indentured servitude and married Chinese men. Even outside of urban brothels, though, they (and their men) lived with the constant threat of deportation and random violence. In 1885, for instance, dozens of Chinese residents of Rock Springs, Wyoming, were killed by a mob of white men who resented their presence in this mining town. No one was punished, and although this incident equals that of violence against blacks in the Deep South, few people are aware of it.

Congress wrote this second-class status into law with the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, which essentially ended immigration from China less than three decades after it had begun. Because of this, the proportion of females within Chinese-American society began to rise, and by the turn of the century, the majority of Chinese-American women were native born—but even though they were born in America, the same 1882 law barred citizenship to anyone of Chinese ancestry.

Just as American law discriminated against all Chinese, so also did their culture discriminate against all women. Even wives of affluent businessmen seldom were seen in public: they were expected to confine themselves to their homes—where they nonetheless were expected to contribute to the family income. In addition to traditional household work, most women also had at least one cash-producing activity. Sewing and laundry were most common, but women also manufactured Asian specialties such as dried seafood.

Especially in San Francisco, traditions of hard work and secure savings helped the Chinese-American community earn a stronger place for itself by the economically chaotic 1920s and 1930s. Enough women were assimilated into American lifestyles by then that they organized mutual-support clubs, which other ethnic groups had done decades earlier. These groups often were motivated by Japan's designs on the Asian mainland: as Japanese troops conquered Manchuria in 1933 and threatened coastal cities, Chinese-American women organized such activities as the “rice bowl campaign” to fund relief. Some responded to appeals from Rose Hum Lee, a Montana-born businesswoman who was in China when Japanese planes bombed Canton in 1937. Much later, she would publish a very scholarly work, *The Chinese in the United States of America* (1960), but during World War II, Hum Lee was an activist for the Chinese under brutal assault by the Japanese.

When Japan bombed Hawaii's Pearl Harbor in 1941, the United States entered the war with China as an ally—





Wong Ruth Moy, who survived Japan's bombing of Canton, works in a Los Angeles aircraft factory in 1943. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

but, of course, the war in the Pacific effectually cut off communications for the next four years. And, although grateful for the military effort to liberate China, Chinese Americans nonetheless felt the war's effect in a personal way: when Japanese Americans were evicted from their West Coast homes as enemy aliens, Chinese Americans understandably worried that whites could not distinguish between Asians. Beyond that, the ongoing civil war in China between the Communists and the Nationalists created further confusion, leaving many Americans suspicious of all Asians.

The understandable result might well be that Chinese-American women would take the path of least resistance and make themselves invisible—but many instead proved their patriotism to the country that discriminated against them and contributed to the eventual victory. The most likely way to participate was to get a job in one of California's many defense industries, and some went beyond that to join the war's volunteer support groups. Perhaps the most prominent of these was the Los Angeles's Chinatown branch of the New York-based American Women's Voluntary Services (AWVS). Their clubhouse was in a popular restaurant, and more than one hundred Chinese-American AWVS women kept it staffed so that soldiers of Chinese ancestry could have a home away from home. In 1943, Congress at last rewarded their loyalty by repealing the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act.

The Army Corps (WAC), which was the most open to African-American women, also accepted and even recruited

Asian Americans. Enlightened enough to see their unique abilities, the WAC recruited fifty women of both Chinese and Japanese ancestry in 1943. They went to Fort Snelling, Minnesota, where they trained at the army's linguistic school for military intelligence work. About half then were assigned to Camp Ritchie, Maryland, near Washington, D.C., where they specialized in translating captured Japanese documents.

A second group of Chinese-American women made up a special unit of the "Air WACs," also created in 1943. Its first two recruits were Californians Hazel (Toy) Nakashima and Jit Wong, and the group became known "the Madame Chiang Kai-shek Air WACs." Madame Chiang, of course, was the best known Chinese woman of her era; as Mei-ling Soong, she had been educated in the United States and was married to the head of China's Nationalist Party.

According to records at the University of Central Arkansas, Ruby Kim Tape joined the Army before either group for minority women was created: even though she had "Mrs." in front of her name, she enlisted almost as soon as that was a possibility. Born in Maryville, California, she grew up speaking Chinese and was so aware of global issues that she organized China-relief projects on the Pacific Coast from 1939 to 1942, when she left for basic training at Fort Des Moines, Iowa. From there, Tape was assigned to the School of Army Administration in Conway, Arkansas. She told the local newspaper:

The people here are most hospitable ... I am so happy that I could join the WAAC, and I have enjoyed every minute of my training. I wouldn't trade places with ... even Madame Chiang Kai Shek ... Uncle Sam surely knows how to keep us fit and trim. I have never felt better in my life. We derive a great many benefits from the WAAC—and get paid besides. I am very grateful to the USA.

Other Chinese-American women joined the oldest of the military units for women, the Army Nurse Corps. One of them, Helen (Pon) Onyett, earned the Legion of Merit for the dangerous work that she did caring for soldiers under fire on the coast of North Africa. The war's effect in opening careers to young women is especially clear in the case of nurses: when Congress passed legislation that created the Cadet Nurse Corps in 1943, more than 200 Chinese-American women signed up for this educational opportunity.

Naval branches generally were less open to minorities than the army, but a few women of Chinese ancestry did join the WAVES. The smallest—and yet the most publicized—women's military unit was the Women's Air Service Pilots (WASPs), and it appropriately featured one of the most publicized Chinese-American women of the war. Hazel Ying Lee was one of thirty-eight WASPs who died in the service of her country.

More than anyone else, it was author Pearl Buck who made American women aware of issues affecting Chinese women. A feminist and internationalist, she especially spoke out against racism in the postwar period. Because of such support, Chinese-American women continued to overcome barriers after the war ended. At least one, Julia (Larm) Ashford fol-



lowed her WAC service in the Pacific Theater of Operations by going on to the occupation of postwar Germany.

She was an exception, however, and as the military generally failed to utilize women's abilities to their highest levels, it particularly failed to appreciate the expertise of Chinese-American women. Many more could have been recruited, and their knowledge of Asian languages and customs might well have contributed to an earlier victory.

*See also:* **African-American women; Air WACs; American Women's Voluntary Services; Army Nurse Corps; Buck, Pearl; Cadet Nurse Corps; Chiang, Madame Kai-shek; defense industries; enemy aliens; Japanese-American women; Lee, Hazel Ah Ying; Lee, Rose Hum; North Africa; Pacific Theater of Operations; Pearl Harbor; underutilization; WAVES; Women's Airforce Service Pilots; Women's Army Corps**

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## CIGARETTE INDUSTRY

Tobacco became basic to the American economy with the settlement of Virginia in 1607, but cigarette smoking, especially by women, was relatively new until just prior to World War II. Although the occasional woman smoked a pipe or cigar in the past, tobacco use largely was a male habit until the "flapper" of the Roaring Twenties appeared—at about the same time as machinery that rolled dainty "cigarettes." Two decades later, when World War II began, cigarettes were ubiquitous among both men and women. In all the advice to young mothers for rearing children during this vulnerable time, for example, not even health journals suggested that she might stop smoking.

Cigarette use reached an all-time high during World War II, as Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration made a conscious decision to avoid the debate over prohibitionist attitudes that had consumed the World War I era. The amendment to the federal constitution prohibiting alcohol sales had been passed during that war as a patriotic conservation measure, and most prohibitionists also wanted to ban tobacco sales. The nation repealed this amendment soon after Roosevelt was elected, and—a smoker and martini-drinker himself—he did not want to resume that debate.

Taking their cue from the White House, both the tobacco and alcohol industries advertised widely in print and on radio, while glamorous movie stars, male and female, also popularized cigarettes. The industry also worked hard to associate itself with patriotism and the military—and military recruiters had no problem with that. Camels, the strongest cigarette brand, conducted a long advertising campaign that featured women in the war effort—women who were not models, but actual members of the Women's Army Corps (WAC), the Navy's WAVES, etc. Other brands, including Chesterfield and Lucky Strike, did the same, and again the military enjoyed the free recruitment advertising.

Cigarettes indeed were considered so fundamental a part of life that the military included them along with soldiers' food rations. Even nurses and other health professionals routinely smoked, unaware of the damage they were doing to themselves and their patients. Addiction was so strong, in fact, that the first thing that most soldiers requested of army nurses was a cigarette. Red Cross canteens handed out cigarettes along with coffee and doughnuts, and almost no one saw that negatively. A dietician with the European Theater of Operation, for example, said in a letter to her mother (later published by Litoff/Smith) that "most everyone smokes." Serving in the tough combat area of Naples, Italy, in 1944, she continued:

Offhand I can't think of anyone who doesn't [smoke] occasionally at least. I know a few doctors here who don't but I [can] think of only one girl and I think she does on occasion. Few women smoke like they really enjoy it. Most look as if they are doing it for effect. For others it's a nervous habit ...

The habit was strong, though, and as nicotine certainly affects the nervous system, it may indeed have acted as a sedative that helped calm some of war's terror. Cigarettes also became a medium of exchange, especially in remote places. WAC Ruth Coster, who filed her memoirs of service in New Guinea at the University of Central Arkansas, found it easy to trade addiction for addiction: although she had worked in a North Carolina cigarette factory prior to the war, she did not smoke, and she had many takers for her standing offer of her monthly cigarette allotment for someone else's monthly allotment of beer.

The addiction particularly hurt the thirteen members of the Army Nurse Corps who were trapped behind enemy lines in Albania during the winter of 1943–1944. Cigarettes were unobtainable in this impoverished, frigid, remote area, and the worst personality conflict of the long ordeal occurred

when the group discovered that two nurses had not shared several cartoons of cigarettes that they had obtained from British intelligence officers. In fact, already by 1941, before U.S. entrance into the war, cigarettes had become so scarce in Europe that Virginia Hall, who spied in the capital of occupied France, wrote in the *New York Post* that “women are no longer entitled to buy cigarettes and men are rationed to two packages a week.” One of her colleagues in the OSS, the forerunner of today’s CIA, specialized in disguising spies—and the only one she lost was a man who thoughtlessly tossed away a half-smoked cigarette. No Frenchman would have done that; the Gestapo immediately saw through his disguise and executed him.

Even for people nowhere close to occupation or combat, a cigarette ration was a valuable bartering chip, as well as the best possible gift to a smoker. Nona Johnson was stationed at the Marine Corps headquarters in Arlington, Virginia; like other posts, it had a giant store dubbed “the PX,” or post exchange. Although this PX was good at “supplying us with items that civilians found difficult to obtain,” she said, still even it had shortages. “So when the word got out that any of the scarce items had been received, the lines didn’t take long to stretch well out the door. Candy, gum, and cigarettes were rationed and we were issued cards which had to be punched when we made a purchase.” Johnson joined these lines to buy cigarettes that she mailed home to her father.

Literally millions of cigarettes ran off production lines every day, and by the war’s end, almost a third of them were bound for overseas. The factories that made them were mostly in southern Virginia and the Carolinas, and they were completely dominated by female workers. Constantly exposed to nicotine, women also worked long hours for relatively little pay. Although strikes were banned during the war, one of the few that occurred was by African-American women who objected to their conditions at a North Carolina cigarette plant. The strike soon was settled, though, because few things seemed so important to the era’s routine as having a cigarette.

**See also:** **advertising; African-American women; conservation; French women; Hall, Virginia; Marines, Women; rationing; recruitment; Red Cross; spies; strikes; WAVES; Women’s Army Corps**

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## CIVIL AIR PATROL

Women were involved in aviation from its beginning: indeed, the first female pilot to lose her life in a plane crash, Harriet Quimby, was killed when her heavy male passenger shifted his weight and caused her open plane to fall into Boston Harbor in 1912—just five years after the Wright brothers patented their “flying machine.” During the Roaring Twenties, several women ran “flying circuses” or performed daring tricks in the air as “barnstormers,” and in the 1930s, Amelia Earhart further popularized flying. She led formation of the “Nineties-Nines,” a still-extant group that originally consisted of ninety-nine female flyers.

By the time of World War II, there were many thousands of American women able and willing to fly—but more than in any other activity, they had to fight to serve their nation. Some female pilots joined British military units during the late 1930s, but that was not possible for many. Instead, they waited for something similar to evolve in the United States, the first of which was the Civil Air Patrol (CAP). Rarely referred to by its initials, it was a quasi-military and gender-integrated organization—but was dominated by men from the beginning and never would have more than a 20 percent female membership. Female pilots whose personal lives allowed real choice left it as soon as the Women’s Air Ferrying Squadron (WAFS) and the Women’s Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) offered better options.

The Civil Air Patrol was organized by an all-male board, including top executives in the Gannett newspaper and Crowell-Collier publishing companies, during 1941. They foresaw American entrance into the war and feared that civilian pilots would be grounded, as was the case in Britain. Their plan to offer planes and services for national use was accepted, and the Civil Air Patrol was authorized on December 8, 1941—just days before Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and the U.S. entered the war.

Operating under the Office of Civil Defense, the air patrol rendered valuable service, especially in flying along coasts to spot submarines. German U-boats, or underwater boats, were active on the East Coast, particularly in the New York/New Jersey area and around Florida’s long coastline. The Civil Air Patrol is credited with identifying 173 submarines—but both because they initially flew unarmed and because members had no gunnery training, the end results become less impressive. Of the enemy submarines spotted, there were 57 attacks, 10 hits, and just two sinkings. Nonetheless, German subs that spotted planes spotting them headed out to deeper water, and as the war worsened for them and their military needs were greater elsewhere, Nazis gave up any coastal attack plans. The same was true on the West Coast, where the threat from Japan initially appeared realistic.



This member of the Civil Air Patrol paid for her uniform, as well as for her training. She may even have donated her plane for men to fly. *Courtesy of National Archives*

It arguably was this very success that eliminated the need for such volunteerism, but in any case, the civilian form of the air patrol ended in 1943, when it became an auxiliary to the Army Air Force. This greater control by the military was at least partly in response to public criticism. Like its parent agency, the OCD, the Civil Air Patrol faced a difficult balancing act: preparedness was the purpose—and when the emergency became increasingly unlikely, it became easy to criticize them for overreacting and especially for wasting resources.

The organization flew twenty-four million miles during its eighteen months of active existence, and although some considered that a genuine sacrifice for the nation, others thought it was an indulgence that allowed the wealthy a disproportionate amount of rationed fuel. The air patrol certainly had an elitist image: its members, after all, were affluent enough to have learned to fly, and many owned planes. Its reimbursement rate of \$8 a day—with payment frequently months late—was reasonable enough, but much it was the misuse of resources that the public resented. Many saw the air patrol as akin to the American Women's Voluntary Services and the Red Cross Motor Pools, which also were accused of wasting gasoline.

That often appeared to be the case, as indicated by this September 1942 story in the *Tampa Tribune*:

Thirty-five planes of the Civil Air Patrol swept over Tampa

yesterday afternoon, dropped 1500 "bombs" in a practice raid, and theoretically left the city in ruins ... Their work done, the planes scurried home and their crews were having sandwiches and cold drinks in the hanger when the "all clear" sounded. Meanwhile, the Hillsborough County Defense Council offices buzzed with activity as reports came in of "damage" to buildings, streets, and bridges ...

To the credit of the men who organized this war game, they did permit a few women to play. The paper pictured Jean Fyfe piloting a plane, assisted by "bombagator" (bombardier and navigator) Mary Lee Moody; two more women were shown as air-raid wardens on the ground. Some Tampanians refused to participate in the drill, however, arguing that it was wrong for thirty-five local planes to burn fuel at a time when troops in North Africa desperately needed it.

Nor did all areas allow women to participate in air activities. Before she was appointed to head the Women Marines, Ruth Cheney Streeter was a qualified pilot who owned a private plane: much to her chagrin, the Civil Air Patrol put it to work patrolling the shores of her home state, New Jersey—but the plane's owner was left on the ground. According to Marine Corps historian Mary Stremlow, Streeter was "relegated to the position of adjutant, organizing schedules and doing all the dirty work," while civilian men flew her plane.

In contrast, Margaret Bartholomew was the commander of Cincinnati's courier station. She was the only woman among the sixty-four Civil Air Patrol members who lost their lives in wartime accidents; Bartholomew's plane went down in a storm between Williamsport, Pennsylvania, and her home station. Arkansas' Louise Thaden also rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel in the air patrol—but she was so distinguished an aviator that she had defeated Amelia Earhart in the first Women's Air Derby. Had she been a man, Thaden's skills doubtless would have been better utilized.

The Civil Air Patrol reappeared as such in the postwar era, and it continues to offer emergency rescue and other services today.

**See also:** *American Women's Voluntary Services; British women; Civil Defense; Marines, Women; North Africa; Pearl Harbor; Streeter, Ruth Cheney; underutilization; WAFS; WASP*

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## CIVIL DEFENSE, OFFICE OF (OCD)

Europe's experience was the motivation for this American agency, especially the "Battle of Britain," when German bombs rained down nightly on English civilians in 1940. The same was true in Russia, after Hitler broke his pact with Stalin and began bombing Moscow. American photojournalist Margaret Bourke-White was the first to explain to Americans the need for civilian defense preparation for such surprise attacks. Reporting from Moscow, she said:

From a hundred rooftops I could see spurts of flame. Some of them caught and spread into a steady red glow, but most of them vanished almost at once. I knew that all over the city, on each rooftop, were stationed groups of citizen fireguards who had been training for weeks for just such a night ... I could plainly distinguish the fire engine's crew. It consisted not of men, but of girls wearing firemen's helmets and asbestos suits.

Because of the possible need for such advance training, the U.S. Office of Civilian Defense was authorized in May 1941—well before the United States entered the war in December. It was headed by New York City Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia, but the OCD was an umbrella agency largely run by volunteers through local extensions. This national network was an attempt to bring some focus to the amorphous anxiety of that time—a time when, as LaGuardia told reporter Dorothy Dunbar Bromley in July, "there are now in existence enough councils and committees and boards and agencies dealing with defense to cause confusion without the aid of an enemy."

Bromley continued with her favorite example of the need to focus. "On April 18th," she wrote:

President Roosevelt called for five-hundred thousand volunteer roof-spotters prepared to detect approaching bombing planes, and suggested that many women could serve in this capacity: on the very same day Mrs. Roosevelt went out of her way to say ... "Mass nutrition education is the most important defense work for women, far more important than learning how to drive an ambulance which may never be driven."

The first lady's comments were influenced by her experience in World War I, when there was a serious food shortage, and would not prove quite so applicable in World War II. Deciding exactly what would be important inevitably was a gamble, and OCD goals evolved over time as needs became clear. Among other things, it would operate salvage and conservation projects; run publicity campaigns for victory gardens, nurse recruitment, and blood donations; and

generally do what needed to be done under the broad term of "civilian" or "civil" defense.

The chief initial goal, however, was emergency preparedness in case of sneak attacks—such as that which did, in fact, occur at Pearl Harbor six months after the OCD began. Because of their proximity to the Pacific, West Coast women quickly followed OCD's advice and the example of British women by sewing dark, heavy curtains to block household light from the night sky so that if Japanese bombers came, they would not find easy targets. During the period in which there was good reason to fear attack, the Women's Ambulance and Defense Corps quickly formed dozens of chapters in California. According to *American Magazine*, these volunteers trained thousands of women to act as "air-raid wardens, guards for public buildings, and couriers for the armed forces." They adopted a daringly feminist motto: "The Hell We Can't!"

Working with the military, the OCD established warning systems by training women and men as air-raid wardens, ambulance drivers, and more; the Civil Air Patrol also operated under the aegis of the OCD. The reality of this need was reinforced by several incidents on both coasts, including German submarines that lurked in East Coast waters and Japanese incendiary balloons sent to the West Coast with the intent of starting forest fires. From Florida to Maine, German submarines deposited or attempted to deposit potential saboteurs throughout the war. In June 1942, for instance, eight German men landed on Long Island with the intent of destroying U.S. industrial manufacturing. Caught by the Coast Guard, they informed on each other in the hope of reduced sentences; several were executed, and others sentenced to hard labor. As late as November 1944, when the European war was almost over, two Nazi men landed in Maine, making it clear that the need for coastal watches remained.

On the West Coast, twenty-six-year-old Elsie Mitchell and five teens and pre-teens became the only fatalities of the Japanese attempt to start fires with incendiary balloons. She was supervising their picnic in the pines near Bly, Oregon, when the young people came upon the strange object: as they investigated it, the balloon blew up and killed all six—on May 5, 1945, just days before the war in Europe ended. That these picnickers did not know the potential danger demonstrates the difficulties that civil defense officials faced: because the military did not want the Japanese to know whether or not their innovative idea was successful, they also did not publicize the balloons.

Japan, in fact, released some 9,000 balloons that were 33-feet in diameter, and at least 10 percent made it across the Pacific. Parts of these cleverly-designed bags of gas, complete with radio transmitters and detonators, were found from Mexico to Alaska. That they did not do more damage was largely due to the fact that Japan did not complete the technology until November 1944, and so the attempts to start fires were made during the West Coast's wet winter and spring instead of its dry summer and fall. By that time, Japan was losing the war in the Pacific, and the project was cut.





Civil defense practice drills such as this aimed to prepare citizens for an enemy attack. Note, however, that the man—probably an air-raid warden—wears a protective steel helmet, while the woman’s nursing cap offers no shelter from bombs.

*Courtesy of Library of Congress*

Another part of the reason that there was so little publicity about these 1944 attacks was because officials had come to see the danger of creating panic among civilians—as had been the case with the hysterical reaction to Japanese Americans after Pearl Harbor. When anxiety about possible attacks grew in 1942, *Independent Woman*—a magazine with a sophisticated audience of business women—asked “Is Your Home Ready for War?”

Can you recognize the enemy—no matter what his disguise? He may be off our coast in a submarine; he may be in a long-distance bomber with charts of our target areas; he may be among us as a saboteur and rumor-monger ...

Is your home light proof? You know, light from a candle can be seen miles away from an airplane. Have you a safety room in your house with the proper items in it? Do you know how to fight fire bombs? Do you actually know what to do when you hear the air raid warning?

Some women, including the president of the General Federation of Women’s Clubs, initially criticized the OCD for not forming a separate women’s division, but others appreciated its gender integration. Quickly organized by job function, the OCD included both women and racial minorities in its ranks. *The African*, for example, referred to it as the “Civilian Army of the Nation” and said:

integrated in this vast net-work of Civilian Defense, we find the Afro-American ... They are serving as air-raid wardens ... ambulance workers, nurses aides ... Black O.C.D. workers are pushing conservation programs, salvage drives, rationing cooperation..., war bond sales ... and similar activities.

African Americans, for example, were depicted in a photo as wardens supervising a practice air raid in a brick basement turned underground shelter in Zone 9, the southwestern area of Washington, D.C. As in other cities, especially those vulnerable to air attack, the local OCD had zoned the city and

put volunteers in charge of the neighborhoods they knew best, where the residents would be most likely to obey orders to get into shelters if enemy planes appeared.

This was just one of the many programs operated by the OCD, and organizing such extensive volunteer work required real skill. That seemed a natural for women, especially women with clerical ability. According to writer Minnie Maffit, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt formally wrote to the national headquarters of the Business and Professional Women’s Clubs a few days after Pearl Harbor, asking these working women to “man” OCD offices in the evening. They and other women soon did. Author Keith Ayling wrote in 1942 that the first thing that impressed him about the OCD was that “the majority of workers there were women. The next was the extraordinary efficiency with which the volunteers went about their duties.”

Without uniforms, without parading, OCD women quietly went about their tasks—answering worried phone callers, typing up databases of volunteers, and teaching those volunteers the various tasks for which they should be prepared. These largely anonymous women provided the leadership that made the difference in whether a town recycled its metal toothpaste tubes for tanks and trucks and whether it rendered its used grease unto the military for use in explosives.

It was primarily OCD women, too, who worked with nurses’ associations to locate women with nursing skills who were not currently employed. A second specific 1942 goal was to recruit one hundred thousand volunteers to be trained as nurses aides for local hospitals. They would replace skilled nurses who then could join the military or work at one of the many convalescent hospitals for troops that would be established in the United States—often in hotels that were vacant because tourism died with gas and tire rationing.

Publicity on rationing, too, was an OCD function, and thousands of volunteer women explained its complexities to

millions of other women. All publicity put out by the OCD included its logo, a triangle within a circle and the letters "CD," for Civil Defense. One of the first posters printed early in the war introduced the logo with "AMERICA CALLING." Beneath was the message: "Take your place in CIVIL DEFENSE. Consult Your Nearest Defense Council."

The last line was significant: OCD offices were in fact highly localized, as were needs. Coastal towns and cities, for instance, might emphasize the need for airplane spotters, with the OCD training volunteers to distinguish enemy planes from American ones and setting up specific sky-watch places and times. That would be unnecessary in the heartland, and there the OCD might instead emphasize a need for agricultural volunteers with the Women's Land Army.

Those needs would continue after it was evident that plane spotters, ambulance drivers, and air-raid wardens no longer were needed—and because of this broad umbrella, the OCD was not criticized in the way that other preparedness agencies were when the anticipated attack did not come. The OCD nonetheless can be fairly criticized for its failure to include women at the highest level. Although the majority of its volunteers were women, all thirty-five of its top officials were men—which meant that the skills and knowledge of countless women were underutilized.

**See also:** African-American women; Bourke-White, Margaret; British women; Business and Professional Women's Clubs; Civil Air Patrol; conservation; Japanese-American women; nursing/nurses; Pearl Harbor; posters; rationing; Roosevelt, Eleanor; victory gardens; volunteers/volunteerism; underutilization; Women's Land Army

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### COCHRAN, JACQUELINE (1910?–1980)

The contrast between aviator Jackie Cochran's glamorous wartime image and her almost Dickensian childhood could not be greater: she truly was a woman who, by sheer willpower and brainpower, created herself.

A native of the Florida panhandle south of Alabama and Georgia, Cochran grew up in extreme poverty with a foster family; she did not know her origins or birth date, but began working at age eight. With less than two years of schooling, she toiled in a Georgia textile mill and then, when she probably was about thirteen, in a beauty shop. Her autobiography, *The Stars at Noon* (1954), depicts a girl who made a quick ascent to adulthood.

She had innate skill as a beautician, however, and by age nineteen owned her shop. Despite the Great Depression, she saved enough money to move to New York, where she worked at Saks Fifth Avenue and began flying lessons in 1932. Friendship with a Navy pilot brought a move to San Diego and greater aviation skills; at the same time, she built a successful beauty business, Jacqueline Cochran Cosmetics, to provide the income to fly. Although she retained the cosmetic company until 1963, Jackie Cochran's life was in the sky.

She set several aviation records during the 1930s, and her name recognition was already sufficiently valuable that she retained it when she married in 1936. Her husband, Floyd Odum, supported her financially and emotionally, and they enjoyed homes in both California and New York. More important to both of them, however, was that in 1938, Cochran defeated a field of men to win the Bendix, an important transcontinental air race. By 1940, she held seventeen national and international speed records—earned at a time when aviation still was sufficiently new that many planes were of dangerously experimental design.

Nor was her mind limited to mere air sport. More prescient than many of the era's governing experts, Cochran understood the implications of European fascism and already in 1939, wrote to First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt about a place for female pilots in the war that was bound to come. By June of 1941, she was so frustrated with American neutrality that she flew a bomber from Canada to England, where she signed on as a captain in the British Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA). From there, she recruited other women who flew the ATA's range of 120 types of planes, including the heavy and sophisticated, as well as the small and dangerous.

After Pearl Harbor forced American involvement in World War II, Cochran returned to the United States early in 1942 and organized the Women's Flying Training Detachment (WFTD) at the Houston airport—at the same time that Nancy Harkness Love, also an accomplished aviator, was organizing the Delaware-based Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS). After complicated bureaucratic wrangling during which both operated, the two officially merged into the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) on August 5, 1943.

Working out of the army's Avenger Field near Sweetwater, Texas, Cochran led the WASP in a variety of tasks that they



Neither WASP director Jackie Cochran nor her pilots held military rank, and she wears civilian clothes as she congratulates graduates of WASP training at Avenger Field in Sweetwater, Texas, on August 7, 1943. *Courtesy of Women in Military Service for America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

performed all over the country: ferrying planes from factories to military facilities, towing targets to train male gunnery cadets, testing malfunctioning planes for needed repairs, and other dangerous work. Most of all, she dealt with the frustrations of being first: as the first American women to do this sort of thing, Cochran and her WASPs were scrutinized far more than any other comparable body.

Equally frustrating was their quasi-military status. Even more than the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC) and other new military units, the WASP held an amorphous position in which they were neither quite civilian nor quite military. Her pilots eventually got uniforms, and they always were subject to military orders—but at the same time they were officially civilians who received neither military rank nor benefits, not even food. Cochran herself was in charge and was held responsible, but held no military rank or power. Although she had been a captain in the British ATA, as head of the American WASP, she was addressed as “Miss.”

Her bureaucratic nightmares finally became so onerous that Cochran sought a solution, asking Congress for either full military status or disbandment in 1944. She overplayed her hand: although the chief of Army Air Force (AAF), General “Hap” Arnold supported her, Congress opted for disbandment. After almost a year of protracted argument, House Resolution 4219, which would have made the WASP part of the AAF, failed by nineteen votes. Female pilots had trained too many male cadets in 1942 and 1943, and Congress had heard from too many men who wanted these women's jobs.

An element of personal jealousy also may have motivated some congressmen, as both Arnold and Cochran inspired the sort of celebrity publicity and devotion from subordinates that politicians crave for themselves. Then, too, Cochran's individualistic approach towards life meant that she never had secured a congresswoman to sponsor the WASP, and that may have been a terrible mistake. Congressmen looked to Rep. Frances Bolton for advice on nurses, to Rep. Edith

Nourse Rogers for the WAAC, and to Rep. Margaret Chase Smith for the WAVES and other naval units—but the WASP had no congressional “mother.” Thus, although they still were extremely devoted to both their mission and their leader, the approximately one thousand women who remained in the WASP went reluctantly home in time for Christmas, 1944.

For Cochran, the WASP was both a stellar achievement and a heartbreak, but she quickly moved on. Traveling on military transportation with credentials from Hap Arnold, she was the first female American civilian to enter postwar Japan in September, 1945; in November, she witnessed the beginnings of the trials of Nazi war criminals in Nuremberg, Germany. President Harry Truman also honored her in 1945; Cochran was the first civilian woman in this war to receive the Distinguished Service Medal, the second-highest decoration that the military grants.

Congress separated the Air Force from the Army in 1948, and at the same time, integrated women into the regular military. Cochran then was sworn into the Air Force Reserve as a lieutenant colonel—still arguably a lower rank than her experience merited. She went on to experiment with new jets, and in 1953, was the first woman to break the sound barrier. (The first man was Chuck Yeager, a close friend who helped care for Cochran as she was dying; the two aviators also visited the Soviet Union as part of a 1959 delegation.) Also in 1953, her mostly-male colleagues elected Jackie Cochran as president of the *Federation Aeronautique Internationale*, the august body that early in the century was the first to issue pilots' licenses.

During the 1960s—when she probably was in her mid-fifties—she set other records, including an altitude of over fifty-five thousand feet in 1961 and flying at twice the speed of sound in 1964. NASA, which was authorized in 1958, named Cochran as a consultant in 1964—and the Air Force finally promoted her to colonel in 1969. She retired in 1970; her devoted husband died in 1976; depressed and unable to fly because of heart disease, she died four years later.



*See also:* **Avenger Field; Bolton, Frances; British women; decorations; European Theater of Operation; Love, Nancy Harkness; Pacific Theater of Operation; Pearl Harbor; rank; Rogers, Edith Nourse; Roosevelt, Eleanor; Smith, Margaret Chase; underutilization; WAVES; WAAC; WASP**

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## COLLEGES

In 1939, the year before the nation imposed its first peacetime draft in 1940, there were almost 1.5 million college students; by 1943, midway through the war, that dropped to 1.1 million. Perhaps a more dramatic expression of the decline is that in 1939, 18 of every 100 high-school graduates finished college; by 1943, that statistic had plunged to 10—the lowest of the

century. This 10 compares with 36 in 1900—and with 40 in 1949, when the veterans who enrolled with the war's 1945 end finished their four years of study.

The empty college classrooms of the early 1940s had tremendous implications for women. Historically, the vast majority of college students were men: the exceptionally of female students can be seen in the era's word for them—co-ed. "Co-educational" in itself said that the "real" students were male, while "co-eds" were supplemental. Indeed, the nation's first college (Harvard) was two centuries old before the first women were admitted to any college anywhere in the world. Ohio's Oberlin was the first in 1833, and at the beginning of the twentieth century, there still were states without a single public college that accepted female students. Those were mostly in the Northeast; in the South, most state systems featured a prestigious, older university for white men, a newer college for white women, and a third college for blacks of both genders. Midwestern and western states were likely to have gender-integrated schools, but—except at teachers' colleges—male students remained a firm majority when World War II began.

The war took those men. Literally millions never enrolled, going straight from high school into the military, while others felt a patriotic obligation to drop out and enlist. Still others were conscripted by draft boards unwilling to exempt them merely because they were students, especially after these boards had to send men with young children to war. Some women also dropped out of college, lured by high wages in defense plants or from a genuine desire to help win the war in one of the many ways that were opening to women. Then, too, as the number of men in colleges plunged, traditional activities such as football and dances became weak imitations of earlier times, and the collegiate experience was less fun. Gladys Denny Shultz explained:

The male contemporaries of these girls are being taken, almost in a body for the war ... The few boys left on college campuses are becoming either tremendously conceited or tremendously bored ... And what it does to the male ego! There'll be no living with one of the creatures.

Many female students, Shultz continued empathetically, were anxious about whether or not they ever would be able to marry and feared that they never would find anyone if they stayed in their virtually manless situation. Some "experts" reinforced that fear. A male sociologist told *American Mercury*, for example, that "no matter what happens, two to five million marriageable women in America are doomed to remain spinsters." His prediction, fortunately, was egregiously wrong, as fewer than a half-million American soldiers of any marital status were killed. That couldn't be known during the war, however, and many young women had reasonable doubts about their future.

The positive result was that at least some female students foresaw the necessity of having an incoming-producing career and took their studies more seriously. Although many missed the usual dating scene, the absence of men did offer unprecedented opportunity for female campus leadership.

Equally important, when total enrollment dropped by such big numbers, admissions officers were forced to adopt a new mind-set. The need for tuition dollars to stay afloat financially meant that colleges (and departments within colleges) found themselves actively recruiting female students for the first time. Even Harvard Medical School finally admitted women in 1945, the war's last year.

That was more because of pressure for additional physicians, however, than because of greatly changed attitudes on female equality. Much of the public remained wary of educated women: only rarely, for example, did anyone suggest that the millions of waiting wives and sweethearts use their wartime to enroll in college. One of the few writers who considered it, Paul Popenoe, largely rejected the idea: "Will she, four years hence, with a B.A., unconsciously begin to feel that she is superior? ... It may end by wrecking her marriage." To many people, especially upper-class ones, the chief purpose of college for women was not to establish a career, but to find a suitable husband.

In some locations, colleges began filling up their empty classrooms by seeking military contracts to train troops. At the University of Tampa, for instance, male students so predominated that enrollment plunged by 70 percent in 1942. University administrators soon turned the situation around by contracting with the area's three air bases to teach math and science to three thousand Army Air Force cadets who needed that background prior to pilot training. It saved the young private college and delighted the female students, who again had their choice of a male majority—and this time, many were from other and interesting places.

Even more than male military personnel, females ones were likely to train at colleges, especially the Navy's WAVES. That precedent was established by Mildred McAfee, who was president of Massachusetts' Wellesley College when she took command of the newly-created WAVES in 1942. Because the Women's Army Corps (WAC) had experienced tremendous overcrowding at military facilities, McAfee placed WAVES training at colleges from the very beginning.

The first WAVES officers were based at Smith College in Massachusetts, an elite, private, single-sex school. Enlisted WAVES went to more plebeian but gender-integrated state universities in Indiana and Wisconsin. As the WAVES grew, others trained at Massachusetts' Mount Holyoke, New York's Hunter College, Oklahoma A&M, Georgia State College for Women, Iowa State Teachers College, and more. A few fortunate WAVES went on for specialized training (and possible permanent assignment) at such prestigious places as Harvard, MIT, and UCLA; about a hundred learned Japanese at the University of Colorado.

While most WAVES had their basic training at colleges and then went on to specialized schools at an actual naval facility, the WAC experience was apt to be exactly the opposite. Their basic training was at one of three army facilities in Iowa, Florida, or Georgia, and then they might go to a college for their technical training. The seven schools of army administration, for example, all were conducted at col-

leges in the South—most of them teachers' colleges, where women were numerous.

Civilian students at these colleges saw military women daily, but there was relatively little contact between the two groups. The age gap between them often was significant, as many WACS and WAVES had completed college, sometimes more than a decade ago. Beyond that, however, most administrators and parents discouraged contact: military women were correctly seen as more worldly, more likely to drink and smoke and have sexual experience than the average college woman of that era. Still, some college students saw these women as role models, and more than one joined the military after admiring the uniforms and attitudes of WACs and WAVES while they marched on the athletic fields of her college.

When the war was over, it soon became apparent that one of the most visible changes it wrought was at the nation's colleges. Because of the free tuition offered by grateful taxpayers with the G.I. Bill of Rights, millions of veterans flooded previously-empty classrooms. Not only did the rate of college graduates soar from the previously cited 10 to 40 percent of high-school graduates, but this stream of mostly-male students also had other effects. A female student who had a shot at being elected president of a small 1943 class, for example, could forget about that in 1946, when her opponent was likely to be a hero of not only the football field, but also of the war.

More important, though, was the displacement of women from the schools that previously had been their own. Florida again serves as an example: because of its good weather, flat land, and long coastline, it had dozens of air and naval bases, and so many men who served there decided to stay when the war ended that they could not possibly all be accommodated at the public University of Florida in Gainesville—and so, in 1947, the legislature changed Tallahassee's Florida College for Women into Florida State University. Where it had been axiomatic that women would hold its collegiate leadership positions, it now was extremely likely that they would go to male veterans.

A few innovative institutions, including New Jersey College for Women (Rutgers), developed programs that reached out to female veterans. This was unusual, though, and *Time* was correct when it commented that "there has been much ado about the postwar schooling of G.I. Joes, but very little about the prospects for ... G.I. Jane." In some states, "veterans preference" and overcrowding reached the point that, according to business and governmental activist Margaret Hickey, "the majority" of colleges took "the simple way out, by excluding women entirely."

That was a sound argument for the Equal Rights Amendment, but the feminist movement had been in disarray since winning the vote in 1920, and the 1940s public generally assumed the superior status of men, especially veterans. Hundreds of colleges built housing for married students in that era, for example, but the usual scenario was that only the man would be enrolled in classes. Women spent their days in tiny studio apartments, where kitchen, bedroom, and living

room were the same—and in these pre-birth control days, often with a baby or two. Similarly, no one had yet heard of “role reversal,” and the idea of a female veteran going to college while her husband spent his days caring for their home would have been impossible to fathom.

Occasional unmarried female veterans did go to college after the war, and an English professor averred that they made excellent additions to classes. He told *Survey*, a sociological journal, that “few women have come back to us from the service, but ... they seem to settle into college life with plenty of vitality:”

An ex-Spar came bounding into my office one day and gaily announced her coming marriage. Her war experience had set her up for life. A very plump Wac appeared in a class and sent the students into hysterics with tales about her basic training. A WAVE officer who was provoked because she had to remain in Washington throughout the war nevertheless had plenty of interesting stories to tell ...

One Wac has remained something of a puzzle. She has found it hard to write anything for the class because, she said, she had seen so much raw stuff she just did not dare put it down on paper. After her first piece, it was plain that something ... had happened. It will take time and help to work out these problems.

Clearly a professor who attracted an unusual share of female veterans, it is his first comment—“few women have come”—that is most important. Most female veterans seemed unaware that the GI Bill applied to WACs, WAVES, etc., and did not use the benefits to which they were entitled. Decades later, when the Veterans Administration finally began collecting data on female veterans towards the end of the twentieth century, many women would aver that they had wanted to go to college and did not understand that their government would have paid for it. They were so accustomed to an auxiliary or quasi-military status that the possibility of equality in this area never occurred to them.

The entire scenario represented a tremendous failure of leadership, especially on the part of Mildred McAfee, Virginia Gildersleeve, and other academic women who also had experience with the military and/or government, and who could have made the connections between female veterans and academia. While millions of men took this opportunity to improve their status, these female leaders apparently did not see that they could encourage young women to do the same.

In all probability, it was class more than gender that caused their short-sightedness. The elite colleges of their experience—Smith, Wellesley, etc.—arguably did not want middle-class and older women on their campuses, quietly believing that these women roughened by war would be a negative influence on the protected daughters of the rich. Although McAfee and others had instituted major change in the military, they did not exert any leadership for collegiate change. That would wait another generation, until female students of the 1960s undertook the task themselves.

*See also:* **courtship; marriage; Gildersleeve, Virginia;**

**McAfee, Mildred; physicians; SPARS; WAVES; WAC; veterans**

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### CONSERVATION

Few messages were more pervasive during World War II than the need to conserve, to save, to make do, to do without. Until the war was over, there would be shortages of everything. This was especially true for everything that came from overseas (such as items made from rubber, then available only from tropical trees) and everything that was essential to the military (such as metal for weapons, tanks, ships, planes, and more). Because millions of men were gone to war and the millions of women who replaced them in factories were busy with war production, a labor shortage also affected manufacture of non-essentials.

Advertising in print and on radio continually spoke to the subject, urging people to understand that they might not be able to buy their favorite products. Some advertisements pointed out substitutes for the unavailable item, but many were simply public-relations messages that encouraged people to conserve what they had and to look forward to a renewed supply at the war’s end. This was true of everything from cars to candy: when Detroit automobile makers retooled to make tanks and trucks, no new cars were manufactured; candy, which is based in sugar and chocolate from the Southern Hemisphere, became scarce when ships were diverted from civilian to military use.

The conservation gospel was preached through countless advertisements and posters; many were created by government agencies and now are housed at the Library of Congress. A typical one on conservation showed a family in their attic: the father was in a business vest, but had his shirt sleeves rolled up as he tied newspapers to be reused because of paper and ink shortages; the mother stood with an apron full of old metal, including ice skates and a horn; their son crawled into a corner to search for forgotten goods. It was captioned: “WANTED For VICTORY: Waste Paper; Old Rags; Scrap Metals; Old Rubber—GET IN THE SCRAP. SELL TO A COLLECTOR OR GIVE TO A CHARITY.”





Prior to television, posters educated the public on the wartime need to conserve and recycle. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

The most famous slogan may have been “use it up, make it do, or do without;” another favorite was singer Bing Crosby’s line, “junk will win the war.”

Silk may have been the single item that most affected women more than men. Nylon and its modern relatives still were in their infancy, and silk stockings—which generally replaced cotton only a generation earlier—were the hallmark of a lady. Almost all silk was imported from Asia, and the war in the Pacific meant there would be no more of it. As women rushed to buy the available stockings, the Office of Price Administration issued ceilings in November 1942, but the maximum price was \$2.50 a pair, still a high cost in the era. Mending stockings became a reality for women during the next three years—and many a man used a present of silk stockings to win attention from a woman.

As experts searched for substitutes, some people earned money by collecting the “silk” of wild plants akin to the tropical kapok tree, which then was used as filling for life preservers. The chief emphasis, though, was on conservation, as an educational poster explained: “The Silk in 185 Pairs of Stockings Will Make 1 Army Parachute—Take Better Care of What You Buy.” Salvage drives also were done for unused silk: the Colorado branch of the American Women’s Voluntary Services, for example, collected 30,743 pounds in just one month, June of 1943. A new silk dress, of course, was out of the question, and as a result, when the war ended, it became fashionable for brides to wear wedding dresses made from the groom’s parachute.

Despite attention to silk, one New York garment executive told *Newsweek* that “the stocking situation ... was nothing

compared to wool.” Again, major exporters of wool such as Australia and New Zealand were cut off by the war, and millions of soldiers would need warm woolen clothing for battles that could be foreseen in cold places such as Germany, Russia, and Alaska. It became important to mothball one’s closets and to give careful care to not only wool and silk, but all fabric—in this worldwide war, even lightweight cloth would be needed for the tropics, as well as for such things as the interiors of airplanes.

Magazines were full of advice on clothing conservation, but much of it suffered from internal contradictions. Cuffs on men’s pants, for example, were eliminated to save fabric, but then men let their old pants hang in the closet when they bought the cuff-less, “patriotic” style. Nor did many adults of either gender heed the advice to go bareheaded: hats were simply an important status symbol in the era, and that did not change. Women who wanted to be known as ladies also continued to wear gloves, even in the summer when they had no utilitarian value. Nor were manufacturers of uniforms for the military and paramilitary organizations careful about conservation. All of the female units of the military, for example, had several styles of uniforms for different seasons and purposes, and they included a full range of appropriate accessories, from hat to gloves to shoes and stockings.

Bed sheets probably were the most serious fabric-shortage item. They were so unobtainable that when the Korean War broke out at the decade’s end, the first item to be hoarded was sheets. No colored or patterned sheets were yet available; all sheets were white, and a conscientious housewife bleached, blued, and ironed them. A 1943 Cannon ad in *Ladies Home Journal* offered detailed instructions on bed linen conservation, warning women not to use pillowcases as laundry bags and spelling out exactly how best to launder and store sheets so that the fabric would be least stressed.

Other fabric advice focused on black-out curtains, as the Office of Civil Defense sometimes imposed those on coastal residents early in the war, when there was real reason to fear nighttime bombing. Windows had to be covered so that no light could be seen from an airplane—but again, internal contradictions on conservation did not bother some writers, as they both urged women to save fabric and to sew elaborate new drapes. Some suggested, for example, that the funereal appearance of the heavy, black material be lightened by covering the inside with more cheerful colors.

Shoes and other leather products also were rationed and had to be conserved—again because the nation had to produce literally millions of combat boots and other items for soldiers, both Americans and allies. Frequent polishing was imperative, and children were warned to keep both leather shoes and rubber boots out of snow and water as much as possible. Mothers somehow were to maintain a normal childhood for their young, while also telling them not to scuff their shoes or wantonly wear them out while jumping rope or playing kick-ball.

Neither clothing nor shoes, however, were as important as the conservation of food. Many kinds of food were rationed,



Chicago children assembled in Office of Civilian Defense headquarters for a pep talk on the need to bring in more scrap. Note the bundled newspapers on the floor in the back. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

the first being sugar and coffee from South America. Although U.S. participation in World War I was too brief for rationing, older women had experience with food conservation from that era of European starvation. Two decades later, Americans again were asked to tighten their belts and save food for hungry allies and for keeping soldiers healthy. One of the basics of food conservation was to grow your own, and victory gardens became a conservation category of their own.

Another basic point was to use creativity to find substitutes for unavailable items and to introduce new foods. Although *Gourmet's* editors seemingly did not realize that a war was going on, other magazines adjusted their content for wartime shortages. Fish was not rationed, and women were told to cook more of that, as well as non-rationed meats such as liver. The shortage of canned fruits and vegetables, which had to go overseas in great quantities, became an opportunity to learn to can and to dry fresh produce when it was in season. Dessert was standard for most Americans in that era, and creative recipes appeared in that category, too. The best known probably was an egg-less, butter-less, milk-less cake: made with shortening, raisins, and hot water; "war cake" was deemed quite tasty.

The fine line between conserving and hoarding also drew attention, especially early in the war before the rationing system was set up to implement fairness. Some affluent people rushed to buy available stocks of sugar, coffee, and so forth, but others were patriotic enough not to do this—and some grocers refused to sell more than a reasonable amount of scarce items. After rationing was imposed, people were required to list what they had stored, and in that simpler time, when there was more honesty and (when the local grocer

was likely to know what customers bought), most people complied. That the complex rationing system worked well is largely to the credit of women: most heeded the anti-hoarding advice of government official Prentiss Brown:

What are we going to do about those extra cans of groceries on your pantry shelves? If you declared them as you should have, you have nothing to worry about ... We don't intend to march into your pantry and count the cans. We won't have to ... Neighbors will whisper. Delivery boys will see them. The children will tell other children. If the housewife is lucky enough to have hired help, the servants will gossip. Someone, as surely as you live, will tell your neighbors or the rationing board. More important, you won't feel very proud of yourself.

Food itself was not the only kitchen conservation priority; the fuel to cook it with also mattered. Women were told to light their oven once, fill it to capacity, and to consume all leftovers before using it again. Home heating fuel was equally important. Sixty-five degrees was the maximum winter temperature, with furnaces turned down further at night. Many people still heated with coal (essential to making steel), and in her conservation classic, *How to Cook a Wolf*, M.F.K. Fisher offered this unusual advice for making a stove or a fireplace burn hotter:

Get one package of fireclay from a fuel-man, and mix it into a stiff paste with water. Make it into balls about the size of oranges ... Dry them in the oven: you are having baked potatoes ... and a pot roast anyway ... Leave them overnight in the cooling oven if you can, and when they seem dry put them into the fire.

That is all. They get red-hot, and give off a lot of heat, and if you treat them gently ... will last "for ages."

Gasoline, too, was imperative for the war's tanks, planes, and more. The true intent of strict rules on its rationing, however, was less to save gas than to save tires (and inner tubes of tires on the era's cars) because rubber could not be replaced until the Pacific war was won. This, too, affected women in ways that might not be immediately apparent: one example is that nursery schools and other enrichment activity for children came to an end because mothers could not get the gas to drive to such non-essentials. Even attending a funeral for someone who lived any distance away became problematic.

The same shortages affected tourism, which came to an abrupt halt and left women who ran restaurants and resorts without income. They had to find alternative work, for the only way to conserve gas and tires was simply to stop using the family car. Public transportation quickly became crowded, and where it was non-existent, people car-pooled, walked, and stayed home. Adolescents may have been the most hurt by this, as school events were curtailed because people could not get gas to go to ball games and other much-anticipated fun of high school.

Many of those adolescents helped out on salvage drives, which were key to conservation efforts. For example, author Keith Ayling said that a used envelope contained enough

paper to make an ammunition cartridge, and waste paper of all sorts could be “turned to war utility at 50 percent of the cost of paper milled from primary sources.” More important, the processing was faster. The same was true with rubber recycling, and people responded enthusiastically to the first salvage drives. Early in 1942, for instance, when President Roosevelt appealed to the public to turn in things such as old garden hoses or rubber gloves, almost a half-million tons of used rubber was collected in just a month. But once such items were gone, they were gone—and it was hard to replicate that success in later drives. Near the end of that year, *Independent Woman* admonished its businesswoman audience that “we are still lagging behind in our salvage contributions:”

Look about your home. Examine the attic, basement, and closets. Old tools. Grandfather’s clock, that iron statue ... you’re not using them and the government needs them. Do you know that an old flat iron will yield enough steel for two helmets; ... an old set of golf clubs will furnish enough metal for a .30 caliber machine gun; eighteen tin cans will make a portable flame thrower; fifteen feet of garden hose will make one life raft for the Navy; there is enough tin in seventy toothpaste tubes for the radiator of an army truck ...

Women planned and publicized salvage drives in most towns, with teenagers then spending Saturdays picking up the newspapers or scrap metal, usually in hand-pulled wagons. Some towns had fenced-off areas where unneeded metal items, such as old pots and pans, could be pitched. Conserving metal also meant that women found themselves scraping rust and repainting bicycles and similar items for their children because no more were manufactured during the war. Garden tools had to be kept clean and oiled so that they would last the duration of the war, nor could a leaky faucet be replaced. Many a woman whose husband was gone to war discovered that she was more of a mechanic than she had thought.

Although the war motivated many marriages, a bride could not expect to buy household “essentials”—nor even necessarily to have a household of her own, as very little civilian housing was built during the war. Especially for the “camp follower” women, who traveled with their husbands from army post to army post, and for women who moved to take jobs at defense industries, these shortages were a genuine problem. They had to beg and borrow even such simple items as a coffeepot or toaster. Large appliances were only a dream, as *Current History* chronicled that already in February 1942: “the production of refrigerators, vacuum cleaners, home radios, washing-machines, ... and domestic sewing machines was stopped and that of ... many other standard consumer goods sharply curtailed.”

Some conservation needs were sufficiently complex that they required explanation. Keith Ayling not only detailed uses for waste paper, but also for such seemingly irrelevant item as meat bones. “Bones are precious,” he said. “The Germans forgot what a bone looked like years ago, so vital are they for wartime industry ... Bones make glue; glue makes glycerin;

glycerin makes explosives ... A single block of houses can supply several tons of bones a year.” Other meat fats also were useful in explosives, and posters addressed the “why” and “how” of this. One featured “SAVE WASTE FATS” as its headline and continued with four pictures of the necessary process:

Save waste fats and grease from cooking  
Strain into a clean can  
Keep in cool dark place  
Sell it to your meat dealer

Women responded in amazing numbers. In one month in one state, for example, Colorado women saved 87,835 pounds of used cooking fats in just June of 1943. They were recycled into explosives, while in the same place and same month, the Colorado branch of the American Women’s Voluntary Services collected 30,743 pounds of nylon and silk stockings that ultimately became parachutes. Posters explained that usage, too, just as they demonstrated the specific process for salvaging tin cans. Showing canned goods morphing into machine guns, its text read:

Save Your Cans —  
Help Pass the Ammunition  
*Prepare Your Tin Cans For War*

1. Remove Tops and Bottoms
2. Take Off Paper Labels
3. Wash Thoroughly
4. Flatten Firmly

The list of things women were expected to do grew long, and some writers seemed to stretch their imaginations to add more. Margaret Davidson, for example, recommended that women dust the light bulbs in their homes, saying that would increase the available light by 20 percent. Doubtless there were women who got on stepladders and dutifully did so, although the connection to winning the war was somehow sadly vague. Indeed, most conservation measures arguably placed more burden on children, adolescents, and women than on men.

A child could not get a metal toy truck at Christmas; a teenager could not go to a distant dance; and a woman spent her days fulfilling a long list of conservation responsibilities—but there were comparatively fewer restrictions on traditional male pleasures. Cigarette use never was higher than during World War II, nor were there any advertising campaigns to curtail it. Every magazine featured pages of liquor ads, and no ration stamps were necessary to buy it. Almost no one questioned this. Conserving, keeping, storing, treasuring—those values and tasks belonged to women, and she could help bring victory by dusting light bulbs.

*See also:* **advertising; adolescence; American Women’s Voluntary Services; camp followers; cigarettes; Civil**



**Defense, Office of; children; defense industries; housing; magazines; marriage; posters; Price Administration, Office of; rationing; travel; uniforms; victory gardens**

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## CORREGIDOR

Corregidor is a giant rock off the coast of Bataan, a peninsula of the main island of the Philippines. Since the Japanese bombed Manila on Christmas of 1941, Americans and their Filipino supporters had been retreating, and Bataan finally fell in April. Then Corregidor became a haven for eighty-seven American nurses, women who had not left their jungle "hospitals" soon enough to escape to Australia.

After months on Bataan, Juanita Redmond, a lieutenant in the Army Nurse Corps (ANC) wrote joyfully of the contrast between Bataan and the new setting. Corregidor, she said:

seemed impregnable, another Gibraltar, with its vast intricate networks of tunnels. It was good to be there, to be greeted by friends, and given hot food and beds; to feel safe again.

Next day at noon the girls from Hospital No. 2 joined us. Their experience had been horrible ... Two of the A.N.C. nurses were missing. They had been cut off at Baguio ... fairly early in the war, and we heard that they and the officers of their small hospitals base had escaped to the hills and joined in guerilla warfare; that was the last report we had of them.

With the surrender of Bataan, numbers of escaped soldiers made their way to Corregidor. Somehow ... they swam ..., or they found some small leaking forgotten raft ... Some were drowned, others were picked off by snipers.

She and her female friends also had been caught in cross-fire as they made the passage, but here they found a new world. Redmond "marveled" at Corregidor's surgical ward: "after the crudities of Limay and Hospital No. 2, I couldn't get over the wonder of white enameled tables beside each bed. They seemed almost indecently luxurious." Marvelous, too, was the ability to have electricity: "we couldn't realize ... that there wasn't a blackout. 'Solid rock overhead,' we had to tell ourselves again and again."

While that solid rock meant protection from the Japanese, it also echoed and reverberated with a terrifying din every time another bomb fell. On April 29, the emperor's birthday, bombing started at 7:30 in the morning and never stopped all day. Over one hundred explosions per hour were counted in this terrible test of nerves. Nurses agreed, though, with Eunice Hatchitt, who later told *Collier's* that their situation was nothing compared to that of the soldiers who "were up topside, manning our guns and the field hospital stations. They had to stay there and take it."

Yet it was far from pleasant down below. Tumultuous sound waves bounced off the tunnel's walls, causing medicine bottles to break and even beds to fall. Dust from shattered rock exploded everywhere, clogging lungs and causing endless clean-up work. Even on a rare day without bombardment, more than seven thousand people were crowded onto Corregidor. They included the eighty-seven military nurses (eighty-six ANC members and one displaced Navy Nurse Corp woman); twenty-two civilian women of several nationalities who happened to be in the Philippines when the war began; twenty-six Filipino nurses; and several dozen female Filipino civilians lucky enough to make it to this shelter. Among them was a Filipina called Felicidad who enlivened nurses' lives by doing shampoos and manicures, as well as entertainingly selling dresses that she somehow had acquired.

The Malinta tunnel system into which they crowded was pushed far beyond capacity. Built long before the war, its main tunnel was 750 feet long and 25 feet wide; eight smaller corridors ran out from there, and hospital beds soon were triple-decked. "The air was thick with the smell of disinfectant and anesthetics and there were too many people," Frances Long said in *Life*, "Several times the power plant ... was hit and the electricity was off for hours. It was pretty ghastly in there feeling the shock of the detonations and never knowing when we would be in total darkness." Under constant bombardment, women went for days without seeing sunshine or breathing fresh air. Many also found themselves disoriented by being unable to tell night from day, and sleeping patterns were further disrupted by endless, exhausting, often nightmarish work.

Commanding General Jonathan Wainwright, who stayed on Corregidor in a humble tunnel office, soon issued an order that everyone who was able to work must do so. This, Redmond said, "not only relieved the overworked hospital staff of a good many details, but undoubtedly was excellent for morale." As the bombing continued, though, and the casualties continued to mount, overworked surgeons



This August 1946 photo of Navy nurse (junior grade) R. Virginia Luoni in the Operating Room doorway of Underground Hospital No. 1 on Midway Island shows the sort of underground hospital that was bombed at Corregidor. *Courtesy of Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

assigned minor surgeries to nurses. Redmond told of amputating a toe, and when she dropped it into the appropriate container, it “fell into the open hand of an arm that had just been removed.” Another horrific moment caused her to lose her temper. “The litter-bearers kept bringing in more and more,” she said:

As I stooped to give an injection to one that they had just put down on the floor, I saw that it was a headless body. Shock and horror made me turn furiously on the corpsmen.

“Must you do this?” I cried.

The boys looked at what they had carried with consternation almost equaling mine.

“It’s so dark out there,” one of them stammered. “We can’t use lights. We feel for the bodies and just roll them onto the stretchers.”

Because much of the American fleet had been wiped out at Pearl Harbor just months earlier, General Wainwright knew that the chances of hanging on to “The Rock” were slim. Conditions grew harder, and as the rescuers for whom they watched did not appear, supplies of food and medicine dwindled. Bloody bandages had to be reused, and the tunnel’s water system was dangerously inadequate. As April drew to an end, he told the ANC commander, Captain Maude Davison, to choose twenty nurses who could be evacuated on planes that were on their way. Davison, a career army nurse who served in Europe just after World War I, selected mostly older women like herself on the assumption that they were closest to exhaustion—but neither she nor her top assistant, First Lieutenant Josie Nesbitt, opted to go.

Other evacuees were younger women who had been wounded on Bataan or who were suffering from tropical diseases, but there also were a half-dozen who fit none of those categories, including Juanita Redmond and Eunice Hatchitt. According to author Elizabeth Norman, Davison’s seeming randomness caused hard feelings, especially because some of the inexplicable choices also were women

who had “connections, often romantic, to high-ranking male officers.”

Hatchitt, in fact, was one of those, as evidenced by the story she wrote for the August issue of *Collier’s*, which she titled “I Was Married in Battle.” She and the others would go to Australia and then home. In San Francisco, the nurses did their best to assist the California Red Cross in answering difficult questions from families of missing soldiers, and in the summer, they were honored at a White House reception. Several then were assigned to work on recruiting nurses and selling war bonds, where they proved effective. These potential abilities might have been what Davison had in mind when she included young, attractive women. Juanita Redmond certainly fulfilled that promise: her book, *I Served on Bataan* (1943), sold well and doubtless helped Americans understand realities of the war.

A small Navy plane took Rosemary Hogan, who had been wounded by enemy fire on Bataan, and other nurses from Corregidor—but, according to author Judith Bellafaire, “the plane made a forced landing on Mindanao Island and all aboard were captured by the Japanese. Hogan and her fellow Army nurses were imprisoned at Santo Tomas,” where soon they would be joined by colleagues still on Corregidor. Those who stayed behind, which included the civilian women, had just days before the final surrender. “On the morning of May 7, in the middle of a difficult operation,” Eunice Young later told *Saturday Evening Post*, “I heard a scuffling noise and glanced up. In the door stood a Japanese soldier with his bayonet fixed. This was the first Jap I’d seen, and my heart popped into my mouth. We were his prisoners.”

Nurses had heard horrifying stories of what Japanese men did to Asians they captured, especially the methodical rapes of Chinese women and the sexual slavery forced on Korean “comfort women.” Although they expected the worst, no nurses reacted hysterically. The Japanese, as it turned out, were shocked to find military women on Corregidor and had

no instructions on how to deal with them. Perhaps because the women were white or perhaps because most were physically larger than Japanese men, nurses would find themselves surprisingly well treated. The same was true for the civilian women. One factor may have been that the Japanese man who issued many orders had been educated at an American university: he may have convinced his colleagues that the long term effect of mistreating American women would be negative.

While soldiers were rounded up behind fences in the hot sun and left without food for a week, the hospital staff—including the men—were allowed to remain in the tunnels doing their jobs. Nurses, of course, were constantly fearful, especially when they slept. Some Japanese had indicated that they believed the women actually were prostitutes, not nurses, and rape was an understandable fear. Only once though, was there an attempted rape, and Mary Brown Menzie fought back, wounding the man with his own knife. Theft was a greater reality, and another woman pretended to sleep as her watch and ring were removed.

To their surprise, nurses' lives on Corregidor remained much the same, except that they were taking orders from the enemy and were forced to bow to them. Several nurses said later that they made their bows quick and perfunctory, but none were punished for that. Two were slapped for presumed insubordination, but none suffered anything like what a man would have in similar circumstances. In fact, Captain Davidson unthinkingly told Japanese generals to halt when they pulled aside the sheet that partitioned off the nurses' quarters. Taken aback at orders from a woman, the generals retreated and Davidson went unpunished. A man in those circumstances probably would have been shot.

As on Bataan, hunger was the greatest problem, as the little food they got was insect-infested and repulsive. Nurses proved resourceful, though: after the guards had done their rounds, they crawled through narrow spaces to a food cache that their captors had not discovered. Again, as on Bataan, they worried more for their sick and wounded "boys" than for themselves. Nurse Madeline Ullom told author Diane Burke Fessler that:

When patients' temperatures dropped to 100 degrees, they had to be discharged from the hospital, regardless of what the wounds or illnesses were. We could only guess what happened to them. We had little food, and an army veterinarian asked the Japanese if we could have more. They became irritated and took him out of the tunnel. We heard two shots, and never saw him again.

In late June, the Japanese allowed the hospital to move out of the tunnel to its prewar above-ground location. According to author Elizabeth Norman, "leaving the tunnel and moving into the bombed-out shell of a building topside was like moving into the garden of Eden"; she quoted nurse Anna Williams as especially jubilant about gardenias that were in bloom; despite the lack of a roof, Williams said it was "good to be in the air and to be alive outside." Nurse Edith Shacklette, according to author Olga Gruhzit-Hoyt, was less

enthusiastic: she said "the bombed-out hospital ... had great big holes in the wall, great big holes in the floor." Others spoke of mosquitoes and the ghastly sight and stench of fly-covered corpses that, for inexplicable reasons, the Japanese would not allow to be quickly buried.

But none of this would matter long, for the women's time on Corregidor came to an end on July 2, 1942. By then, many were sick from tropical diseases and malnutrition, and some found it difficult to climb the rope ladder to the *Lima Maru*, the ship on which their Japanese captors took them to Manila. Doctors also went, and more than two thousand patients were crammed into the hold. Their captors offered the women tea and rice cakes during the three-hour trip, but unwilling to appear to be friendly and also fearful that it might be doped, they did not accept.

The Spanish word "corregidor" is related to the English word "correct," in the sense of correcting behavior. The island had gotten that name because of its early use as a penal colony, and its history as a prison was ironically renewed during World War II. Nor was it the last prison that its inhabitants would see. When they disembarked at Manila, men and women were separated. While the men went on to cruel fates as slave laborers elsewhere, the women would be confined at San Tomas prisoner-of-war camp until February 3, 1945.

**See also:** **Army Nurse Corps; Bataan; bond sales; Hogan, Rosemary; nurses; Pacific Theater of Operations; Pearl Harbor; prisoners of war**

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## CORRESPONDENTS, WAR

Many more women worked as foreign correspondents during World War II than is recognized by most people today. Their names were frequently on newspaper bylines reporting from war zones, sometimes on the front page of major papers or the cover story of magazines. Others broadcasted war news on the radio waves, sometimes so far from English speakers that they did not know if anyone heard their hard-won stories. Still other correspondents termed themselves photographers because, at least initially, military regulations did not recognize the category of photojournalist, forcing them to choose between having a press pass or taking a camera along.

Once a woman had the press credentials issued by military authorities, she then had the right to don an army uniform—both skirts and pants were available—but all reporters were subject to military orders, and all news copy that they wrote had to be approved by censors before it went on the air or to their home press offices, usually via cable. According to Colonel Barney Oldfield, the army's colorful top Public Relations Officer (PRO), more than one hundred women obtained press credentials to cover the war.

Almost every magazine had at least one woman reporting from aboard, and many sent multiple women; the *Time/Life* empire, for example, had upwards of a half-dozen women representing it overseas, while among newspapers, the *New York Times* alone sent at least seven women. Other women got credentials as radio broadcasters, while another group was credentialed by news syndicates such as Gannett, Associated Press, United Press International, the North American Newspaper Alliance, and more.

Even a few minority women got press credentials, including Sylvia de Bettencourt for *Correio de Manhã* and Martha E. Phillips for *Afro-American Newspapers*. Although most were from East Coast publications, the Midwest was well represented with female reporters for papers in Chicago, Cleveland, and Detroit. The clearest deficiency, oddly enough, was from the West Coast, where women had full civil rights longer than in eastern states. Catherine Polk represented the *Los Angeles News*, but she was exceptional.

Author Julia Edwards says that about one in every seventeen press passes went to women, but adds that women's actual presence as war correspondents was even greater than those numbers indicate because the PROs issued many press passes to high-ranking men in the publishing business whose overseas tours were brief. Female journalists, in contrast, fought to get credentials and to get the story—and sometimes got the story without getting the permission.

Like many things about the military, this depended on the commander. General Dwight Eisenhower, who led the European Theater of Operations, was progressive in his attitude towards women; in contrast, when asked to credential a woman, General "Vinegar Joe" Stillwell of the India-Burma-China Theater gave a one-word reply: "no." The chief PRO for the war in North Africa was a well-known misogynist, but it is arguably true that for every one of his sort, there may

have been four or five officials who were more willing to cut a woman some slack than to do so for another man.

Certainly many motor-pool drivers went out of their way to respond when a female reporter asked to be taken somewhere, and some officers were delighted to have women visit their troops. Especially in the Pacific Theater, combat veterans might not have seen an American woman in years, and the opportunity to talk with one—and perhaps to have their names in the paper back home—raised morale immensely.

Some war correspondents became sufficiently well known that they merit individual attention. Those who have biographies elsewhere in this book are: Therese Bonney, who ran her own news service in Paris; Margaret Bourke-White, perhaps *Life's* most famous photographer; Doris Fleenon, who covered army nurses on the Mediterranean front for *Ladies Home Journal*; Martha Gellhorn, a respected journalist in her own right, despite her marriage to novelist Ernest Hemingway; Marguerite Higgins, a 1952 Pulitzer Prize winner for the *New York Herald-Tribune*, who got her first big stories with the 1945 liberation of German concentration camps; Helen Kirkpatrick, a journalistic veteran who worked out of London; and Dorothy Thompson, one of the first people to interview Hitler and warn the world about him.

Other experienced women also served as role models for newer female correspondents. Anne O'Hare McCormick's credentials were so well established that, in 1936, she had become the first woman on the *New York Times* editorial board. She went personally to cover occupied Germany, and her report, "The Woman with a Broom," symbolized the efforts of women all over the world to clean up the postwar mess. Shelley Smith Mydans was an experienced writer in Asia and spent much of the era as a prisoner of war. Inez Robb was one of several women who worked for International News Service; she covered the early portion of the war in North Africa. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt particularly praised Sigrid Schultz, a *Chicago Tribune* reporter whose expertise on prewar Germany was angrily acknowledged by top Nazi leader Hermann Goering.

All of these women and more offered encouragement to literally dozens of other female war correspondents—an occupation in which role models were particularly important, for it required exceptional intelligence and bravery. Like soldiers, these women endured nights on the bare ground with snow in Europe and monsoons in the Pacific; they ate army rations, bathed from a helmet, and literally put their lives on the line every day to bring the real war home to American readers.

Some worked for other women. Among the era's major publishers were Helen Rogers Reid, publisher of the *New York Herald-Tribune*; and Dorothy Schiff, who had the same role at the *New York Post*; Cissy Patterson, owner of the *Washington Herald*, is profiled elsewhere. No women yet had made it to the executive ranks of radio, but a number pioneered war news delivery in that medium. Betty Wasson

covered Europe for the National Broadcasting Company (NBC) with reports ranging from Russia's invasion of Finland and Germany's invasion of Norway to Greece and other parts of southeastern Europe—where alliances shifted and one never could feel safe. Mary Marvin Breckinridge, who has a profile in this book, worked for Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS) in Europe.

A few female correspondents were veterans of the World War I era, the most notable of whom was Peggy Hull. Although some women had reported on the 1898 Spanish-American War for major publications, Hull received the first credentials that the War Department issued to a woman for a combat zone in 1918. She went on to endure nine months in Siberia while reporting on the Russian Revolution and then spent much of the 1920s and 1930s in Asia. By the 1940s, she would be Peggy Hull Deuell, a widow fighting age and weight discrimination. It took a long effort to get back to her beloved Orient, but by 1944, when the fighting was most fierce, she was there.

Her friend Irene Corbally Kuhn also lived in Asia, and in 1924, Kuhn had been the first person, not merely the first woman, to broadcast radio news from China; in World War II, she would do so again. A third older woman, who shared the print medium with Hull, initially was not known as such: R. Baldwin Cowan was a successful political reporter covering the Texas legislature during the 1920s—until a United Press (UP) executive came to Austin to congratulate Cowan's work, discovered that "R" stood for "Ruth," and promptly fired her. She quickly rebuilt her career with UP's rival, Associated Press (AP), and by 1942, was covering the war in North Africa. Like her INS colleague Inez Robb, Cowan worked in Washington during the 1930s; both women were friends of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt.

The war truly began in the 1930s, almost a decade prior to American entrance, and there were a half-dozen female correspondents in China when Japan began attacking its coastal cities. In addition to Kuhn and Hull cited above, they included Agnes Smedley, whose biography appears elsewhere, and *Life* correspondent Shelly Smith Mydens, who wrote a 1945 book, *The Open City*. She was among those who could not escape in time and were imprisoned by the Japanese in Manila; another such woman was Jennifer White, an AP correspondent. Some non-professional writers also told of this devastating time, including a refugee whose name happened to be Eleanor Roosevelt; she was a distant cousin of the first lady.

In the same 1930s that Japanese fascism expanded in Asia, other women warned about Hitler and the rise of the Nazi party in Europe. Dorothy Thompson and Sigrid Schultz were the most important of these, but Josephine Herbst also did an important 1936 six-part series in the *New York Post*, which was published by Dorothy Schiff. Herbst's series detailed her experience in Berlin, where she witnessed mistreatment of Jews—but most Americans ignored the red flags that she and others raised.

Helen Rogers Reid's *New York Herald-Tribune* gave many

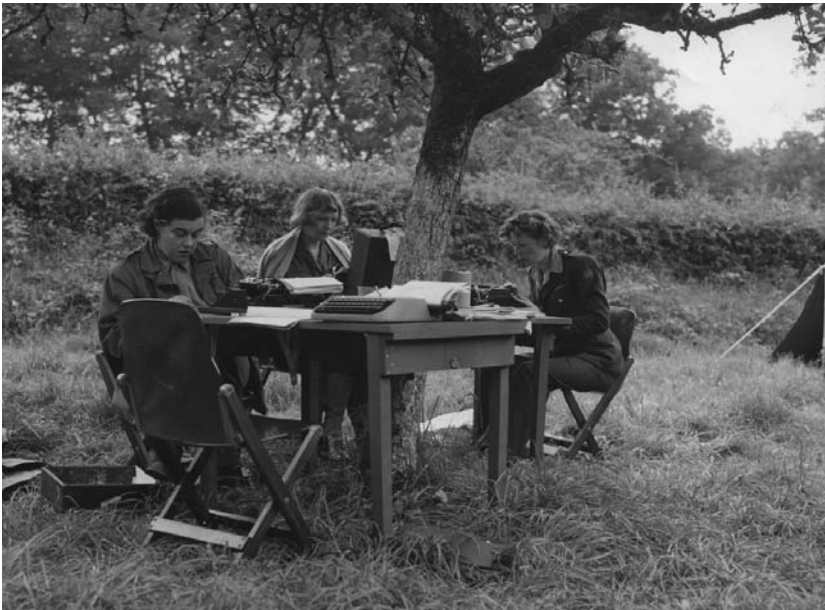
important assignments to women, including to young Tania Long. She was hired when she was in London in 1938, while her Russian-born mother tried to get family money out of Germany. As was the case with several other women, it was Long's stories of the 1940 London blitz that made her reputation. She wrote of the death and devastation in London, as well as moving copy on the Nazi's torpedoing of a ship that was evacuating English children to Canada. Long's name changed to Daniell in 1941, when she married a *New York Times* reporter, and because the papers were direct competitors, it was a given in this era that she would quit her job while he kept his. She free-lanced and some of her work, especially on liberated France, was published in the *Times*' Sunday magazine.

The *Herald-Tribune* also hired Russian native Sonia Tomara. Speaking a half-dozen languages, she covered dangerous areas of eastern Europe in 1939 and was almost killed when Germany invaded Poland that year. She was in Paris when it fell to the Nazis in 1940 and fled to neutral Portugal. After time in New York, Tomara headed to the China-Burma-India Theater in 1942, where—as the only female reporter on this huge and horrible scene—she managed to reverse General Stillwell's ban on women. According to author Lilya Wagner, Tomara was "in Calcutta when the Japanese bombed that city in December of 1942," and the next year, she spent three months deep in China's interior on the Yangtze River. In a 1943 cable to the New York Newspaper Women's Club, Tomara said she had "traveled some 30,000 miles in Army planes... It was not easy to get accreditation, but since I was passed ... [I have] the same facilities as men." The next year took her to Iran, Algeria, and then finally back to Paris, where she joined her liberated family.

That was about the same time that the *Herald-Tribune's* major competitor, the *New York Times*, sent Kathryn McLaughlin to Europe. A veteran of the *Chicago Tribune* before joining the *Times*, McLaughlin endured the same hardships as younger women during the exceptionally cold winter of 1944. Her most important stories would be the next year, when she covered the Nuremberg trials of Nazi war criminals and the founding of the United Nations.

At least four women covered the long, freezing front of the 1944 Battle of the Bulge in northern Europe. Lee Carson of INS and Iris Carpenter of the *Boston Globe* were there from its beginning, while "Dot" Avery of the *Detroit Free Press* and Catherine Coyne of the *Boston Herald* came in with soldiers and without authorization. Coyne may have had the least experience of any of these correspondents: *Herald* executives hired her explicitly because its subscribers were complaining that they did not have anyone comparable to the *Globe's* Iris Carpenter, who wrote with the warmth of a woman speaking to readers about their loved ones at risk. At the war's end, Carpenter reflected her experience with some cynicism in *No Woman's World* (1946).

Coyne, Carson, and others of these correspondents were attractive, youthful-looking women, and that also was true of Mary Welsh, the fourth and last of Ernest Hemingway's



War correspondents type their dispatches, to be cabled to their home newspapers, in France in July 1944, the month after D-Day. From left to right: Virginia Irwin, *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*; Marjorie Avery, *Detroit Free Press*; and Judy Barber, *New York Sun*. Note the pup tent in the background which constitutes a home. *U.S. Army Signal Corps Photo, Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

wives. She looked younger than she was, however, when they met in wartime London. After working at the *Chicago Daily News*, she had moved to London's *Daily Express* and was reporting from Paris for it when France fell in 1940; she took one of the last, crowded boats to England. She also broadcasted for the BBC, reported for magazines owned by the Time-Life Corporation, and returned to Paris on its first day of liberation in 1944. Like other female reporters, Welsh kept her maiden name while married to Australian reporter Noel Monks; they divorced at the war's end, and she took Hemingway's name when they married in Cuba in 1946.

UP correspondent Ann Harrell Stringer also was young, having been born in 1918, the year that World War I ended. She arrived in London in 1944 intending to join Reuters, the British news service that employed her husband—only to find that he had been killed on D-Day. She stayed with UP and undertook stories so perilous that some believed she wanted to join him in death. After covering the liberation of France, Stringer went on without permission to battles such as Holland's Maastricht. Ignoring telegraphed orders to return to Paris, she moved forward with the army—carefully sending stories back via people, rather than by telegraph or telephone. Stringer was the first to report that the Russian army had crossed the Elbe, Germany's chief industrial river, and when she entered the notorious concentration camp at Dachau, according to author Lilya Wagner, "the ovens were still smoking."

Although these major news syndicates and daily newspapers employed a number of female war correspondents, the era's major news magazines, *Newsweek* and *Time*, were less likely to hire them. They did devote much space to women's wartime issues (especially the formation of women's military units), but most articles were by men—and were often relentlessly perky in tone. *Newsweek's* record on hiring women as war reporters was abysmal: instead of hiring the INS' Lee Carson, for example, its writers dubbed her, according

to author Nancy Caldwell Sorel, the "best-looking woman correspondent." It was not mere looks that led to Carson's successful coverage of such major events as the Normandy invasion, the Battle of the Bulge, and the meeting of U.S. and Russian allies as Germany collapsed between them.

*Time's* record on hiring women was only slightly better. Its biggest star may have been Lael Tucker, who with her husband, *Time* reporter Stephen Laird, covered Berlin early in 1941, arriving there via an adventurous trip through Manchuria and Russia. Her name changed when she divorced and married Time-Life executive Charles Wertenbaker. She continued to report, covering the 1944 liberation of Paris and the 1945 German surrender at Rheims—while also bearing two children during the war years. She believed, according to Sorel, that "she was the only pregnant woman in the U.S. Army allowed to stay at her job." Moreover, after the war, she published numerous books under the name of Lael Tucker Wertenbaker, most of them on the arts.

Because news magazines seldom employed women as war correspondents, female reporters were more likely to see publication in women's magazines. *Woman's Home Companion*, for instance, hired both Doris Fleenon and Patricia Lochridge for war-front coverage. Lochridge had worked for the Office of War Information until she could obtain more interesting work, first with *Collier's* and then with *Woman's Home Companion*. She entered Germany, said Sorel, so close to its collapse that Lochridge "saw dead men spilling out of the boxcars" at Dachau. Later and on the other side of the world, she, Peggy Hull, Shelley Mydans, and a couple of other women covered the battle of Iwo Jima from nearby hospitals ships, where they shared quarters with the Navy Nurse Corps.

Even the epitome of women's magazines, *Vogue*, employed Lee Miller for articles on the war. A brilliant woman with a troubled if wealthy past, she was living in London when the blitz began. As German planes rained bombs on English



civilians, Miller took photographs that were published as *Grim Glory*. She went on to relate such events as the 1945 collapse of Cologne and the destruction of Hitler's retreat, Berchtesgaden. At Cologne, she was joined by another reporter from a magazine that seemingly would not send a woman—especially not an older woman—to a war zone, but Janet Flanner was, in fact, a longtime writer for the *New Yorker*, and she reported on the allies' victories in northern Europe.

*Collier's*, a weekly mass magazine in the same category as *Life* and *Look*, was perhaps the best of these for hiring women. One of their stars was Alice-Leone Moats, who spoke five languages and began her career by reporting from Moscow in 1940; like Lael Tucker, she had to travel there via Asia. On her circuitous trip, Moats wrote from Tokyo, Shanghai, Saigon, and the Nationalist Chinese capital of Chungking, finally going by plane from there to Moscow. After the United States entered the war, she reported from neutral Spain and, immersing herself in the French underground, visited occupied Paris before returning to Portugal and finally the U.S. Like some other female reporters, Moats compiled her fascinating experiences into several books; the last during the war era was *No Passport for Paris* (1945).

Like Moats and Tomara, Martha Gellhorn also spoke several languages. That ability may have been more prevalent among female than male reporters. These women had grown up in an era when higher education curricula often remained significantly different for female students than for male ones. While young men were encouraged to study business and the "hard sciences," young women were guided towards decorative arts and languages. A proper lady was supposed to speak at least French and possibly German or Italian, but there was little similar societal expectation for men. The result was that female correspondents appear to have been more able to communicate directly with allies and enemies, while many men seem to have been dependent on PROs and their press releases.

Technical knowledge also could be an important advantage, something that Georgette Meyer Chapelle acquired when she wrote *Girls at Work in Aviation* (1943)—under name of "Dickey Meyer," a combination of her nickname and maiden name. Her husband, photographer Tony Chapelle, joined the Navy, and knowing that he likely would be sent to Pacific Theater, she applied for credentials there. Her paperwork arrived in February 1945, before his orders did, and according to Edwards, "this time the husband saw his wife off to war." Barely in her twenties at the time, she thought she was bound for Hawaii, but was fortunate to get on a plane with nurses and ended up covering not only Guam, but also Iwo Jima.

AP reporter Bonnie Wiley also was young—and small: when she covered the Pacific Theater in 1945, she dropped from an initial weight of 118 pounds to 97. An Oregon native, she was the first female reporter on Guam after its liberation and the first to write about Iwo Jima. Although Wiley complained that military officials would not allow her to do her job, she nonetheless managed to file early stories

on Okinawa and on the first Americans liberated from POW camps in Japan.

Peggy Hull Deuell, who was much older than Wiley, echoed her complaints about limitations on female reporters, saying, according to Sorel, that "overwhelming obstacles are frequently set up to prevent us from working." Instead of being valued for her knowledge of both the World War I and of Asia, Deuell had to fight to obtain credentials for the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*. Nor did her old networking do much to help: although her recently deceased husband had been managing editor of the *New York Daily News*, this did little to ease her path in the Pacific. Finally credentialed for Hawaii in 1944, she wrote empathetically of wounded soldiers hospitalized there, and when she got to Saipan in 1945, some men recognized her from earlier interviews.

Lyn Crost went the opposite direction, going to Europe for the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*: she was one of very few who reported on the Nisei, the Japanese-American men who served in the U.S. military. Among the soldiers Crost wrote about was young Daniel Inouye, later a U.S. senator from Hawaii. She followed these outstanding warriors through Italy and on to France and Germany, where she was one of the first to see the horrors of the Buchenwald concentration camp. Nisei men welcomed her coverage, even bringing her tea and other comforts.

Crost's coverage of one specific battalion may have been among the most personalized reporting of the war, but other women also specialized in the "human interest" angle, writing understandingly of average soldiers and civilians who were devastated by the organized, terrifying violence that is war. Most female reporters demonstrated this empathetic way of detailing the news, and the ordinary GI Joe appreciated it. It was true even for Martha Gellhorn, a star employed by *Collier's* for straightforward nearly-monthly war reports. She not only wrote beautifully, but also spent her time with average soldiers, not officers and certainly not PROs. Here, for example, is part of her story on D-Day:

The wounded were carried carefully and laid on the deck inside the great whale's-mouth cavern of the LST. After that there was a pause, with nothing to do ... Then there was the usual inevitable comic American conversation: "Where're you from?" This always fascinates me; there is no moment when an American does not have time to look for someone who knows his hometown. We talked about Pittsburgh and Rosemont, Pa., and Chicago and Cheyenne, not saying much except that they were sure swell places and a damn sight better than this beach. One of the soldiers remarked that they had a nice little foxhole about fifty yards inland and we were very welcome there ...

That personal contact is why soldiers brought tea to Wiley and why they let Ann Stringer ride in their jeeps, despite orders to return her to Paris. That was why Dot Avery and Catherine Coyne made it to battlefields without waiting for paperwork, and why Dickey Meyer got to faraway Guam instead of merely Hawaii. Although many officers in charge of military public-relations offices seem to have discriminated

against women and favored their male buddies, the younger enlisted men almost always applauded these women—and gave them the real story as seen from the field, not from the press release. Without inventing jargon for it, they pioneered the “embedding” of journalists.

They earned respect from all but the most biased. Author Penny Colman quotes INS foreign news chief John C. Oestreicher’s excellent summary of what happened during the four years of the war:

Prejudice against women as foreign correspondents ... disappeared ... when from the battlefronts of Europe there suddenly appeared an avalanche of magnificent copy bearing feminine bylines ... To the surprise of virtually everyone in the craft at home, ladies of the press checked in day in and day out with stories that the men correspondents didn’t get.

Whether or not women could get her story past the military’s censors was another topic, but at least some censors also identified with soldiers more than with PR departments. Because they read everything, censors knew which writers did the best job of conveying war news, and according to Edwards, a censor in North Africa offered the highest praise when he said that except for the great correspondent Ernie Pyle, who was killed near the war’s end, “only the women really understand these GIs.”

**See also: British women; censorship/secretcy; European Theater of Operations; magazines; North Africa; occupied Germany; occupied Japan; Pacific Theater of Operations; radio; refugees; Roosevelt, Eleanor; under-utilization; uniforms**

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### COURTSHIP/DATING

World War II changed the meaning of being young. Because one’s life might well be short, it had to be lived faster and more intensely, and nothing reflected this more than the pace of getting to know a romantic partner. At the same time—especially at the recreation centers for soldiers that were operated by the Red Cross, USO, and others—dating was ritualized to remove virtually any potential for commitment or even any truly personal contact. One dance partner was intended to morph easily into another, with no time permitted for feelings that might prove painful.

The dating scene for women in the military varied significantly, depending on their branch and their station. Those in the Army Nurse Corps (ANC) and especially the Navy Nurse Corps (NNC) were surrounded by men almost from the day of enlistment, and like the USO and Red Cross women, were forced to develop a relative indifference to the many men they encountered. The initial experience of women in the new military units—the Women’s Army Corps (WACs) and the Navy’s WAVES, SPARS, and Women Marines—was quite different. Nurses were required to have their training before they enlisted and went to work in large hospitals with many men almost immediately, but women in the other corps spent most of their first year in basic training and then in specialized training. Their lives were spent largely with other women, with few eligible men around.

Sometimes organized dating opportunities were arranged for them: WACs at the School of Army Administration in Conway, Arkansas, for example, were taken to nearby Camp Robinson for dances. Often, though, soldiers made it clear that they preferred going to places where they could meet younger, civilian girls. Instead of attending an event where

the men had been ordered to appear, many military women opted to spend their weekends in the barracks, studying for the next week's classes.

Whether or not the dating scene improved after graduation very much depended on where a woman was stationed. Even WACs who went overseas, where men hugely outnumbered women on paper, often did not see many eligible men. Especially in the Pacific Theater of Operations (PTO), they were kept well behind fighting lines and usually worked at a headquarters with older, often married, men. The same was true in the European Theater of Operations (ETO) after D-Day, when tens of thousands of men left England in a matter of hours. While they went on to combat on the continent for the next year, most women would remain behind.

A more important factor, however, was that throughout the military, officers and enlisted personnel could not date. All nurses were axiomatically officers, which meant that they could "fraternize"—to use the military's term—only with other officers. Navy nurses on a ship, for example, could socialize only with men of the same or higher rank, with not the ship's crew or with the thousands of sailors who probably were onboard. In the close quarters of a ship, these rules usually were followed. It was harder to enforce them elsewhere, but because—except for Washington, D.C.—there always were many more men than women in any military setting, most women willingly accepted the rules. Whether they were officers or enlisted personnel, they knew that once they were at a military post, a long line of men would clamor for dates.

Fraternization regulations also relaxed as the war intensified, especially for enlisted women with skills that made their recruitment and retention essential. Cryptographer Grace Porter Miller, for example, said that in England in early 1944, the priority was D-Day planning, not social rules:

Enlisted WACs were not supposed to date officers, but the rule was never enforced. One army captain from a unit in northern England came to London quite often to see me. Charles and I ate in all the best restaurants, attended all the best plays and parties, and met many officers from our units, and nothing was ever said to either of us about our enlisted-officer relationship.

Indeed, according to eminent army historian Mattie Treadwell, Supreme Commander Dwight Eisenhower appeared unaware of the ban on such dating until *Stars and Stripes*, the army's newspaper for troops, starting publishing letters complaining about it. "What is all this?," he reportedly inquired, and then said that he wanted "good sense to govern such things." The Navy, too, relented, as Helen Huntington Smith reported already in autumn of 1943 that it recently had "repealed the pointless regulation which forbade the 'social mingling of Wave enlisted personnel and naval officers.'" Of course, many enlisted sailors preferred the old rule, which essentially reserved enlisted WAVES for them and prevented competition from officers.

To the extent that dating limitations were real, they fell harder on African-American women and especially on the

minority of this minority who were officers. Most cities had a USO or other club that was designated for African Americans, but because officers were not supposed to fraternize with enlisted personnel, a black, female officer would find it extremely difficult to meet a datable man. She also would reasonably fear that racism could make it more likely that rules would be enforced in her case.

Only about a half-million women, however, served in the military during the war years—compared with upwards of ten million men at any given time. The rules therefore had their greatest affect on the youngest men, those who had been drafted or who had enlisted prior to obtaining the educational credentials necessary for officers. These "boys" of seventeen to twenty-one years old constituted the backbone of the military, the soldiers and sailors who would do the vast majority of the fighting. To maintain the morale that allowed them to face death with youthful spirit, the USO and other groups arranged dates in a way that would border on "procurement" if it were done outside of a military setting. From California to Maine, countless towns found an unused building that was turned into a club, where civilian women were bused in for dates with soldiers.

The reverse was never done for "production soldiers"—the young women who left their hometowns for jobs in the defense industries that made the essential war materiel. Aircraft factories and shipyards, for obvious reasons, usually were on the coasts and near cities, but munitions plants were likely to be built in rural areas where an accidental explosion would do the least harm. Military training facilities also tended to concentrate on coasts—and these patterns strongly affected dating. Whereas, for example, a sailor stationed at Mobile, Alabama, could find entertainment and a possible date on Saturday night, a young woman working at the big munitions plant in Childersburg, Alabama, would face a long string of dateless weekends. She also would face hostility from local women, who resented competition from these outsiders for the few available men.

In military towns, the opposite would be true. Tampa, Florida, for example, had three air bases, and even high school girls had their choice of airmen. Some women in San Diego and other California cities where sailors embarked for the Pacific had a dozen or more proposals of marriage during the war years, often within days or even hours of meeting the man. Most were serious enough that if the woman had said yes, the marriage would have taken place. It left a great deal of responsibility in the hands of very young women—with the result that many parents refused to allow their daughters anywhere near soldiers or sailors. Even though they knew that their own sons might be miserably lonely in some other town, they felt that a dating scene featuring so many desperate young men was simply too dangerous. Everything about the situation was unbalanced, artificial, and too temporary to be trusted.

Thus, even men who had been popular at home could feel daunted by their attempts to date in military towns. "You would think I had leprosy," said one to sociologist John Cuber. Although he "knew the ropes" of meeting women,





A couple dance, probably at a USO club or other such facility. Note the many men in the background without dates. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

he discovered that donning a uniform meant prejudgment, and that people who supported the troops might not be supportive of a singular soldier if there was any possibility of truly personal contact. His conclusion was that “you have your choice between a low level of sensual woman ... and the very professional welfare-conscious attitude of the U.S.O. There isn’t anything else.”

It made a guy very much appreciate a gal from back home. If he was fortunate enough to have such, letters could be exchanged and societal permission granted for spending time together. Already in 1942, such a prim source as *Good Housekeeping* assured protective mothers that “Nice Girls Go on Military Weekends.” The article continued with a list of rules, much akin to those that governed students at women’s colleges on Ivy League football weekends. A “proper” girl telegraphed ahead of arrival and met her date at a public place, perhaps the USO. She was cautioned not to expect much of his overcrowded military town and to pay for her own transportation and her room:

Leave him free to spend his limited funds on food and amusement ... Be prepared to stand in line for everything

... Remember that many places are restricted to officers ... Sunday morning you’ll want to go to church ...

Showing his bunkmates that he had another life, having evidence that some girl cared enough about him to travel perhaps hundreds of miles was terribly important to a serviceman. It was especially imperative because he knew that once he went overseas, months might go by without seeing a woman, let alone an American one. When nurses and WACs finally did arrive on the war-torn European continent, most were far too busy to date—and all of the nurses were officers, and thus unavailable to the average man. When the war in Europe ended and nurses were bound for the Pacific, some gathered at Marseilles to await ships. Then, ANC member Janet Hoffman said to author Diane Burke Fessler:

There were lists in the latrines to sign up for parties. Different groups, like engineers, would send a notice that read, “Need 30 girls for party on this date.” Thirty would sign up, a truck came to take us to the party, and the truck brought us back by curfew. It was fun, and it was safe.

It was not a good way to develop a lifelong relationship, however, and for many men, especially prior to departing the U.S., it was important to have begun a relationship. They wanted a commitment from a woman, wanted to believe on the battlefield that she was yearning for him and that she would write him letters and would be faithful to the hope of his return and especially would not date others. Gilbert Kohlenberg, for instance, had written to Mary Jane Walker while he was training in Texas and she was a WAVE assigned to Washington. When he learned that he was going to the ETO, she said in her memoir:

He telephoned me with the news that he ... would have a twelve-hour pass to New York City ... [and] asked me to meet him for dinner the next evening. The next day, 22 December 1944, was a Friday, and I was able to get a weekend pass ...

It was just getting dark when the train arrived ... [and] he was due back at the base before midnight, so we would have only a short time together.

Gilbert, who never changed his mind once it was made up, had decided that we should become engaged to be married. Since we had no idea when we might meet again in person, Gilbert proposed that we become engaged by mail ...

Gilbert wrote to me when he got to England to say that I should buy an engagement ring and wear it, and let him know the price so he could send the money for it ... My cousin ... took me to the jewelry store where his family shopped, and the owner selected a one-carat diamond in platinum for me ... I put the ring on and have worn it ... since.

The two were exceptionally serious young people, however, and had known each other a long time. In most cases, going overseas meant that it would be unusual to meet a woman and even harder to create anything like a typical date. Even a sophisticated, high-ranking man could expect difficulties aboard, as naval lieutenant Ralph Carson explained to *Saturday Evening Post* of his experience in North Africa:

For months we had watched dog-faced G.I.'s leaning over ship rails, so when the nurses arrived they all looked like [movie star Betty] Grable ...

Courtship wasn't easy. There wasn't any place to go. The officers lounge? But that meant 100 men and a girl. I had a comfortable billet, but Madame had a sign in the lobby, "Ni chat; ni chien; ni femme"—no cats; no dogs; no women.

He preserved, as did others. Despite the obstacles, millions of women and men met, dated, and made promises. They defied advice from parents worried about broken hearts and lives; they ignored clergymen who almost always advised them to wait; they slipped out of the rule-bound clubs created by the well intended. They fell in love, and rates for marriages and births—as well as divorces—soared as a result.

**See also:** adolescence; Army Nurse Corps; birth control/birth rate; colleges; D-Day; divorce; European Theater of Operations; letters; marriage; Navy Nurse Corps; North Africa; Pacific Theater of Operations; Red Cross; SPARS; USO; WAVES; Women Marines; Women's Army Corps

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### CRAIGHILL, MARGARET D. (1898–1977)

Dr. Margaret Craighill was the first female physician to officially belong to the Army Medical Corps. She led medical services for the Women's Army Corps (WAC) during World War II.

Although she had outstanding credentials for this position (and any number of others), and although her male ancestors were professional army officers, there had been no place for a female physician in the army when she was young. The Army Nurse Corps and the Navy Nurse Corps had been in place for decades when World War II began, but female physicians had to leap large bureaucratic barriers to serve their nation.

Perhaps because of her stellar educational background, this was less true for Craighill than for most. Born in North Carolina, she earned both bachelor's and master's degrees at the University of Wisconsin. After an unsuccessful marriage to a physician, she worked briefly as a physiologist in chemical warfare at the Army's Edgewood Arsenal in Maryland, and then enrolled in Baltimore's Johns Hopkins School of Medicine. One of the most prestigious medical schools in the United States, Johns Hopkins had admitted women since its 1892 beginning, when major donor Mary Garrett insisted that it do so.

After graduating in 1924, Dr. Craighill went on to residencies with Yale University and New York's famed Bellevue Hospital. She lived in affluent Greenwich, Connecticut, where she also maintained a private practice in obstetrics and gynecology, until 1940, when she moved to Philadelphia and became dean of Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania. This historic institution began as Female Medical College of Pennsylvania, when it was founded by Quakers in 1850. That was just a year after Elizabeth Blackwell became the first credentialed female physician in the modern world; she graduated from a previously all-male school in 1849. Women's Medical College (WMC) was the first institution of its kind, preceding medical schools that Blackwell and other women would build to educate female physicians later in the nineteenth century.

Craighill may not have realized the importance of this history: given the opportunities that she had at Hopkins and Yale, she easily could have lacked an appreciation of past feminist struggles. The women on WMC's board presumably hired Craighill because they respected her credentials, but she may have lacked sufficient respect for their (volunteer) executive abilities. In any case, in her eagerness to modernize WMC's curriculum, she began by attempting to remove lay board members and to replace them with professional physicians. It may have been a relief to both sides of this power struggle when the United States entered World War II, and Dr. Craighill took a leave of absence to serve in the new Women's Army Auxiliary Corp (WAAC).

Assigned to the Surgeon General's office as the liaison to the new corps, Craighill was commissioned as a major and later promoted to lieutenant colonel. Although some women, both nurses and physicians, had received military commissions in both armies of the Civil War, she was the first female physician commissioned in the twentieth-century Army Medical Corps. Working out of its Washington, D.C., headquarters, her first responsibility was to create the health standards for the army's female recruits, an area in which she worked with WAAC Director Oveta Culp Hobby and other founding officers. Both Craighill's rank and the travel support she received were more equitable than that of many other women, in and out of the Medical Corp. She not only supervised the seventy-five female physicians who served in the war, but also made a round-the-world trip to inspect their facilities on all fronts—including the dangerous plane trip from India to China "over the hump" of the

Himalayas. She earned several decorations, including the Legion of Merit.

All physicians, male and female, had only temporary commissions for the duration of the war, and Craighill returned to WMC at its end. Again, there was a clash of wills, and she resigned. Perhaps influenced by her wartime experience, she changed from her old OB/GYN field to psychiatry and enrolled in the first class of what would become the famous Menninger School of Psychiatry in Topeka, Kansas. Dr. Craighill then returned to Connecticut, where she was named chief psychiatrist in residence at Connecticut College for Women in New London. After a second marriage, she died there at age seventy-eight.

**See also:** Army Nurse Corps; Barringer, Emily; decorations; Hobby, Oveta Culp; Navy Nurse Corps; physicians; rank; underutilization; Women's Army Corps (WAC)

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## CRYPTOGRAPHERS

The military occupational speciality (MOS) of cryptography truly came into its own in World War II, as codes for sending messages developed into a science that would expand into the fundamentals of computer science. Message-sending had been part of warfare since prehistoric days of smoke signals, and indeed, it was the Signal Corps under which army cryptologists functioned.

Until coding began to develop with the Morse Code for sending telegraph messages in the mid-nineteenth century, it had been routine for diplomatic and military messages to be written in ordinary language. Even though spies and other couriers (including women) did their best to hide them, most military messages were written so that they could fairly easily be understood by any enemy who obtained them. The new science of cryptography was intended to solve this problem with complex disguises for information—and methods of figuring out what the enemy's messages said—but there



Women Marines translate shortwave code messages, Marine Corps Air Station, Cherry Point, North Carolina, April 1945. *Courtesy of National Archives*

was resistance to adopting these methods. As late as 1929, Secretary of State Henry Stimson closed down a new unit for this with the proclamation that "gentlemen do not read other gentlemen's mail."

"Gentlemen" or not, after Japan's attack on Pearl Harbor a mere dozen years later, most Americans agreed that foreknowledge was a good thing. By the war's end, all major powers had developed multiple coding systems that could be understood only by those with access to current code books. Battlefield officers did not spend time learning these codes to send their messages, but instead depended on cryptographers to encrypt information on such vital matters as troop strength, supplies, anticipated weather, and other crucial aspects of anticipated confrontations. Whether or not soldiers lived or died soon came to depend on the accuracy of encoding and decoding messages—and on intercepting and interpreting enemy messages. Two particular factors in eventual victory were related to this: Americans began to break Japanese codes early in the war, and the Japanese never did catch on to the "Navaho code talkers," the Native American soldiers who used that language as military code.

Prior to computers, the work of encoding and decoding was incredibly tedious. Every detail of a complex translation process from ordinary language into the current code had to be absolutely correct—and the military soon reasoned that women, who often were trained from childhood to be more patient than men, were well suited for such tedious detail.



(Indeed, back in the 1880s, “computer” applied not to a machine, but to a person. The first women were hired by the Harvard Observatory for measuring distances between stars; they proved more accurate than men at doing long division all day.) Teachers—who inevitably had practice with patience and persistence—seemed particularly suited to cryptography, and Grace Potter Miller was one who fit that description.

An elementary school teacher in Iowa before she joined the army, she proved to be such an outstanding cryptographer that she and another enlisted WAC were the first two women among a handful of Americans chosen to learn British coding systems. They attended a school at Oxford with other allies, including Australian and Canadian men. Their permanent work station was in a Hertfordshire manor house, and in describing it, Miller offered an excellent summation of the nature of cryptographic work everywhere, as the same conditions apply. She explained:

Six cryptographic technicians, two WACs and Four GIs, worked in two tiny secret rooms in the basement ... Specially reinforced concrete walls at least three feet thick surrounded us on top, bottom, and all four sides, with no outside windows or vents. To enter, we had to pass through three guarded doors, then knock on the code room door and be identified by voice before we were allowed to come in. The door was always locked immediately after we entered.

We worked around the clock in shifts, with two people always there to receive and send messages. Communications came in and went out in various codes, some on teletype machines, some written or typed. We decoded or encoded them and sent them on to the proper persons ... Many of the codes were in long series of five-letter groups: MCMOD RFVLO CDRMA, and so on. Accuracy was essential. One letter wrong, and the meaning of the whole message could be lost. Sometimes it took considerable time and effort to discover which code was being used, especially if the [radio] signal had become garbled in any way during transmission. It was work that took a great deal of patience and concentration, and it was tiring.

It also was claustrophobic, as the thick-walled rooms inevitably were small. Both Miller and the man she worked with were physically large, and when there wasn’t enough work to distract them, he felt like a caged tiger, pacing the available three feet forward and three feet back. The airless rooms that cryptographers used also encouraged respiratory disease, especially in an era when almost everyone smoked cigarettes. The MOS long had the highest rate of tuberculosis, often brought back by soldiers from North Africa and other fronts, and then easily spread by coughing in confined space.

The aspect of this close confinement that Miller apparently considered unimportant, however, was that, at her station, these were one-man/one-woman teams. Her memoir contains more than usual commentary on sex, but she apparently considered it unworthy of mention that a young man and woman spent many hours alone in very private quarters. The same

was true of other cryptographers, although most duty rooms had more than two people.

The restricted nature of the setting also meant tremendous boredom when no work needed to be done. An active mind was absolutely essential, not only for the complex task, but also to keep one’s sanity through long hours of the same four walls. Another danger of boredom was that these bright and creative minds would end up questioning the value of what they did. That was the case with Marie Pinter, whose memoirs are archived at the University of Central Arkansas. An employee of the US Weather Bureau until she joined the WAVES in 1944, the Navy did a good job of combining her previous skills with new ones in cryptography—but she nonetheless became frustrated with the tedium of the work. After speciality school in New Jersey, she was assigned to naval intelligence in Washington, D.C., where, she said:

We were ... attempting to break Japanese code on weather information. Data was sent out in a series of 5 or 6 digit numbers with each number carrying definite meaning ...

Japan had stationed weather observers on many small islands dotting the Pacific ... Our radio operators could intercept these messages ... A sunken Japanese sub had yielded a set of code books ... Every day or night (our section worked around the clock) all personnel were given several sheets of the intercepted messages and a code book. By subtracting the numbers in the code book (random choice) from those in the message, we hoped to make sense of them ... [But] only occasionally was a message broken and by then the data might be out of date and useless. Frustrating, tedious work. To this day I cannot believe the results justified the enormous amount of man-hours involved.

Pinter may have been correct in terms of messages on weather, but ultimately the frustrating work of cryptology was justified. It was crucial not only to understanding other coding systems, but also to today’s computer world. Many women in cryptography, especially the WAVES’ Grace Hopper, learned systems during the war that led to computer languages that changed the world.

*See also:* **censorship/secretcy; electronics industry; intelligence, military; military occupational speciality; Hopper, Grace; spies; WAVES; Women’s Army Corps**

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## **DAUSER, SUE SOPHIA (1888–1972)**

The first woman to attain the rank of captain in the U.S. Navy, Sue Dauser arguably should have been an admiral. She commanded some fourteen thousand members of the Navy Nurse Corps (NNC) who were assigned to ships and hospitals all around the world; many naval men at that rank command only a fraction of that number and usually at one place. When the Navy finally did promote a woman to its highest rank, it would be another NNC chief, Alene Duerk, who became the first female admiral during the feminist revolution of the 1970s. Then the corps, which began in 1908, would be much smaller than it was during Captain Dauser's World War II tenure.

Dauser retained that name all her life, as the Navy prohibited its nurses from marrying until war finally made it inexcusable to dismiss the skill, experience, and investment in a woman simply because she married. Dauser, however, remained unmarried. Born in Anaheim, California, when that was a sparsely-settled area, Dauser studied for two years at Stanford University and then transferred to the California Hospital School of Nursing in Los Angeles, from which she graduated in 1914.

That was the same year that the "Great War," later called World War I, began in Europe, and Dauser joined the Navy Nurse Corps in 1917, the year that the United States entered the war. She served in Scotland in 1918, and with the war's end that year, was transferred to naval hospitals in Brooklyn, New York, and then San Diego, California. Assigned to the hospital ship *USS Henderson* in 1923, she cared for President Warren Harding when he sickened and died during an Alaskan trip.

Like other women in both the NNC and its counterpart, the Army Nurse Corps (ANC), Dauser lived a pleasant life

in the 1920s and 1930s. Secure in the military's system of providing everything essential to life, she also was assigned to places where servants were customary, including Guam and the Philippines. All of her duty was on the Pacific, including Washington's Puget Sound, California's Mare Island, and the huge naval facilities at Long Beach.

In 1939, when war again broke out in Europe, she was assigned to Washington, D.C., and appointed as the corps' superintendent. By then, she had a great deal of executive experience because, in the NNC tradition, nurses seldom did the menial duties; they supervised corpsmen who performed those tasks. Even before Japan bombed Hawaii's Pearl Harbor and the U.S. entered the war late in 1941, however, it was clear that there would be a shortage of nurses to deal with the literally millions of sailors who would need care. Dauser's chief task was to recruit more nurses, a goal shared by Julia Flikke, then commander of the ANC, as well as Flikke's mid-war ANC successor, Florence Blanchfield. The Red Cross and other supportive organizations helped with nurse recruitment and training, while the media ran countless articles on the need for nurses.

Like the ANC chiefs, Dauser joined with Congresswoman Frances Bolton in efforts to increase the supply of nurses by offering financial incentives, especially via the new Cadet Nurse Corps. She also worked with them for more equitable rank, pay, and benefits, and in December 1942, she was rewarded by being promoted to captain. Six months later, the ANC's Blanchfield, who was even more severely under-ranked, would be promoted to colonel, the army equivalent of Dauser's rank of captain.

When Congress debated Rep. Bolton's nurse-recruitment bill in 1943, and again in 1945, when nurses almost were drafted with the Nurses Selective Service Bill, several

members of Congress criticized the NNC for its failure to admit qualified African-American women. None singled out Dauser personally, however, and although the criticism was entirely valid, such racism was more the fault of the entire Department of the Navy rather than particularly her NNC. Dauser, however, was very much a person in the military and nursing traditions, and not a rebel. She quietly and effectively carried out the tasks she was assigned, attracting much less press coverage than similar women—even when she dealt with the issue of permitting naval nurses to marry.

An incident related to that issue demonstrates Dauser's empathetic nature. Five NNC members were captured on Guam in January 1942, and after several months in Japan, were exchanged for Japanese prisoners of war. One of them, Doris Sterner, fell in love with an American diplomat during the long trip home, and when their ship reached Mozambique, they wed. "At that time when you were married, you were automatically out of the Navy," Sterner said, adding that she wrote a letter to "Miss Dauser" and "apologized to her for my abrupt departure from the Navy." Dauser replied warmly, saying, "we are all so happy for you and never for a moment must you think that we had any harsh thoughts."

Captain Dauser retired in November 1945, two months after the war's end, and was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal. Age fifty-seven at retirement, she lived in LaMesa, California until her death at eighty-three.

**See also:** African-American women; Army Nurse Corps; Blanchfield, Florence; Bolton, Frances; Cadet Nurse Corps; draft; Flikke, Julia; hospitals; nurses; Nurses Selective Service Bill of 1945; rank; Red Cross; recruitment; underutilization

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## DAVIS, EMILY CLAIRE (?–1987)

The top official for women who were assigned to the Army Ground Forces (AGF), Davis had one of the most significant positions in the new Women's Army Corps (WAC). The AGF was the second-largest of nine such commands, and Davis also played a strong role in developing a permanent place for women in the postwar military.

When she left her Beverly Hills, California, home, it was still the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps, or WAAC; the

auxiliary status would not be dropped until mid-1943. Prior to that, however, Davis was among the first women to attend the prestigious Army Command and General Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. Betty Bandel, chief aide to WAAC Director Oveta Culp Hobby, spoke to the four hundred men and sixteen women who made up this unprecedented 1943 class. In a letter to her mother, Bandel highlighted Davis:

In Kansas City, Dot Muni & Emily Davis were waiting to greet me—as excited as all get out. Capt. Rice (the general's aide) had asked them to get me, since he was picking up all the stray generals as they came in. There was a slight war dance & then we all went & ate & talked a mile a minute, & drove out to Leavenworth. Muni & Davis are among the 16 WAAC officers who will graduate Apr. 8, 1st women ever to take the Command & General Staff School.

Davis soon was a major and speaking to large audiences herself. The *New York Times* noted the precedent when she was assigned in July to "serve on the staff of Lt. General Lesley J. McNair, the commanding general of the Ground Forces." The following February, she and five other WACs with similar responsibilities were promoted to lieutenant colonel. Davis worked especially closely with Bandel, and the two soon headed parallel organizations, with Bandel as chief of "Air WACs" attached to the Army Air Force (AAF), and Davis in charge of the opposite "ground forces."

Because aviation was still new and seen as glamorous, Bandel's unit soon became the largest of any WAC command. Beyond that, Bandel had the advantage of working with AAF officials, including stellar General "Hap" Arnold, who were highly supportive of women, while Davis' male counterparts were traditionalists who often refused to utilize female skills, especially nontraditional skills. In fact, on a trip to Fort Knox, Kentucky, Davis found women who had been given no work because they could not type; instead, they sat in their barracks all day. The result was that when the WAAC changed to the WAC and women were given the option of leaving the service, her AGF lost more personnel than any other command; 34 percent felt so underutilized that they left the army for civilian work.

When the war ended in September 1945, there was appreciable risk that the WAC would end with it—but one of its strongest advocates was the respected commander of the European Theater of Operations and future president Dwight D. Eisenhower. He directed his staff to ask Congress to make it permanent, and in February 1946, Davis and her friend Mary Hallaren were given the task of drafting a bill to take to Congress. Both were then lieutenant colonels, again an arguably low rank to be assigned such historic work. Among the many complex details involved, for just one example, was whether or not a career WAC would be given credit for the time she spent when it was the WAAC, with its awkward auxiliary status.

They wrote the bill quickly, however, and within weeks, it was moving up the army's chain of command for comment. Decisions were made; revisions were written; and with almost miraculous bureaucratic speed, the WAC Integration



Act of 1946 was presented to committees of both houses in late July. Congress, however, adjourned on August 2: its members were eager for their first vacation since the war ended, and they were facing particularly unpredictable elections in November.

A knowledgeable person such as Davis understood that a long time would pass before the bill gained attention again and all of its details were worked out, and indeed, when it finally passed, it would be the Armed Forces Integration Act of 1948. By then, she had resigned.

*See also:* **Air WACs; Bandel, Betty; European Theater of Operations; Hallaren, Mary; Hobby, Oveta Culp; underutilization; Women's Army Corps; Women's Army Auxiliary Corps**

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### DAVIS, FANNY-FERN SMITH (1903–1998)

A botanist who developed techniques that ultimately would increase food production, Fanny-Fern Davis came to that result through the circuitous route of golf.

She was one of many women who found employment opportunities that would not have been open to them except that the war took millions of men away from traditional jobs. After earning a doctorate in botany (and marrying another botanist, Dr. Everett Davis), she worked for the National Capital Parks Service in Washington, D.C., until 1943, when the U.S. Golf Association (USGA) hired her as acting director of their "Green Section." She never received the permanent title and returned to her old job at the war's 1945 end—but three decades later, the USGA rectified its mistake by making her the first female recipient of its prestigious annual award for "distinguished service to golf."

In fact, what she had done was far more important than a mere game, for Davis was one of the first to experiment with plant hormones and to help unlock the biological secrets of plant growth. According to *Golf Digest*, she used "huge, outdoor bonfires ... under oil drums in order to melt the wax ... in which 2,4 Dichlorophenoxyacetic acid was then dissolved." The ultimate result was herbicides—something that can be an environmental negative, but also can be a real positive for controlling broadleaf weeds that choke out vegetables and grain. Improved grass quality was also important to the dairy industry, as better pastures increased production of butter, cheese, milk, and more. Such improvements in food

production were vital as the world faced starvation during and after the war.

Davis turned forty the year that the USGA hired her, and she had enough contacts among other botanists that she was able to expand grass research at the federal government's agricultural experimental farms in Beltsville, Maryland, as well as other at universities, including Penn State. Most important in terms of public attention, however, was the fact that she sought and won permission to test her herbicide on the White House lawn, thus demonstrating its safety. Meanwhile, her husband worked on hydroponic techniques for growing vegetables, a project that was aimed at getting more fresh produce to combat areas. Hydroponics, too, has been of great long-term value, especially in short-summer places where vitamin-filled foods previously were difficult to obtain.

The couple retired to the Florida panhandle, where Dr. Fanny-Fern Davis founded the biology department at Okaloosa-Walton Community College and researched wild flowers. Despite experimentation with powerful chemicals, she lived happily until her death at age ninety-five. A nature trail and wild flower park in Valparaiso, Florida, is named for her.

*See also:* **food; employers/employment changes; scientific research and development**

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## DAYTONA BEACH WAC TRAINING CENTER

The first post for women in the military was at Des Moines, Iowa, where members of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) began their basic training at Fort Des Moines, in a cavalry facility that was no longer needed for modern warfare. The third basic-training post would be at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia—but in between, the WAAC experimented with a non-military locale.

Because the entire idea of military training for women was new for the United States (although not for its allies, especially British women), it was reasonable to test the viability of a non-standard site. Beyond that, military installations all over the nation were crowded with new soldiers, and it was difficult for WAAC officials to find any commanders of extant facilities who were willing to accept these untested female volunteers. Women were so eager to enlist, however, that Fort Des Moines soon overflowed, and some were assigned to "barracks" that actually were downtown hotels. When the need for another post was clear, WAAC Director Oveta Culp Hobby and her staff decided to place it in such a civilian setting.

Daytona Beach, Florida, was a logical choice. One reason was that the military already had dozens of facilities scattered throughout Florida—an ideal locale because of its dependable weather, proximity to the Atlantic and the Gulf, and especially its flat land for aviation training. A second rationale was that because gasoline and tires were rationed, Florida's tourism industry had essentially ended; hotels, restaurants, and other facilities were empty, and their owners were desperate for dollars.

The third reason for the choice rarely was mentioned in the era's documents, but it was the influence of African-American leader Mary McLeod Bethune. She not only served on the WAAC's Advisory Board, but also had founded Bethune-Cookman College in Daytona Beach early in the century. WAAC Director Hobby, although a Southerner, was more progressive on race issues than any other commander of female military units, and because of Bethune's history in the area, Hobby knew that African-American WAACs would feel comfortable in Daytona Beach.

It was a perfect fit between the military, which needed vacant space and a cooperative local attitude, and a town that very much wanted newcomers. The transition was abrupt—but after recovering from his shock at this non-military setting—a *Colliers* reporter was enthusiastic: "You can find the Fifth Avenue Gown Shop," he wrote, "but you won't find any gowns inside. Instead, you'll find a crowded classroom, a WAAC teacher and a couple of hundred WAAC students."

Before they arrived in classrooms, however, new recruits lived in a tent city. Trainee Gertrude Pearson Cassetta described this to author Olga Gruhitz-Hoyt as "miserable" because of exceptionally cold weather in January 1943—but most of the time, Florida tent life would be sweltering. Despite discomforts, though, new recruits continued to demonstrate the same enthusiasm that they had shown at Fort Des Moines: *Reader's Digest* reported soon after the Daytona Beach facility opened that "an order had to be issued prohibiting WAACs from drilling by flashlight."

After they had gone through a four-week course in an old cantonment area, WAACs were considered trustworthy enough to live in hotels and apartment houses. In a typical military facility, there is no privacy: whether in a classroom, on the parade grounds, in the mess hall, or in a barrack bunk, every aspect of one's life is subject to inspection—and officers did their best to replicate this in Daytona Beach. Beds might not be the regulation size, but superiors regularly checked to see that they were properly made; shoes were shined, uniforms ironed, and everything neatly stowed. If one recruit took a Florida-vacation attitude and failed to follow regulations, both she and her bunkmates well might lose their weekend passes.

WAACs agreed that weekends were better in Daytona Beach than in Des Moines. Many more recreational opportunities were available, and even though some seven thousand WAACs were stationed there at any one time, even larger numbers of soldiers and sailors were nearby. Townspeople arranged dances and other entertainments, and men came to

Daytona Beach on Saturday nights from as far as 150 miles away. Despite early fears, this brought no riotous behavior: instead, according to *Colliers*, it was simply "thousands of young men and women who quite naturally enjoy one another's company."

At the end of basic training, women returned to the tent city where they had arrived. From there, they were individually out-processed to the numerous schools that would train them in their military occupational speciality, or MOS. Congress dropped the "auxiliary" status of the WAAC in 1943, making it simply the Women's Army Corps (WAC), but that changed nothing important in Daytona Beach, where WACs continued to be trained until the war's end. As at Fort Des Moines, the Daytona Beach setting was commanded by a man; not until the third facility opened at Georgia's Fort Oglethorpe would a woman, Elizabeth Strayhorn, be in charge.

*See also:* **Bethune, Mary McLeod; British women; Des Moines, Fort; Hobby, Oveta Culp; military occupational speciality; rationing; recreation; travel; Strayhorn, Elizabeth; Women's Army Auxiliary Corps**

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## D-DAY

Perhaps no event in the history of mankind was better planned than the June 6, 1944, invasion of France, which began the liberation of it and the rest of Europe from Nazi control. Leaders of the Allied Forces—Americans, Britons (including Australians and Canadians), as well exiles from conquered places such as France and Poland—prepared for years: indeed, by the time that the invasion came, people joked that southern England would sink under the weight of materiel and men amassing there. Germany's occupying armies in France also knew that the invasion would come, but could not guess exactly when or where. Hitler was convinced that it would be at Calais, and the Allies did an excellent job of maintaining that deception, including placing dummy "armies" that appeared to be aimed there.

Instead, General Dwight Eisenhower, who headed the European Theater of Operations, surprised Hitler by attacking on five Normandy beaches near Caen. The highly secret date was chosen for tides that would enable ships to disembark soldiers as safely as possible, while the earliest parachuting troops were aided by moonlight. June also provided the longest possible daylight, which ultimately enabled some

150,000 men to cross the English Channel and establish themselves in France during one long day. They were aided by some 11,000 planes and 5,000 naval crafts, most of which were built in part by American women. American troops took the toughest two beaches, code-named Omaha and Utah, which had high cliffs where German guns in concrete bunkers could fire down on them. The charge demanded tremendous courage and ability, but partly because Hitler waited for the “real” attack and refused to use his forces at Calais, casualties were lower than expected.

No women were there on that horrific day, but many participated on the English side of the Channel. “On June 6,” WAC cryptographer Gertrude Pearson Cassetta later told author Olga Gruhitz-Hoyt, “we awakened at daybreak to the heavy drone of aircraft. We went outside and saw hundreds of bombers literally darken the sky as they flew on their missions to France.” She and some five hundred other Signal Corps women had arrived in England via Scotland just weeks earlier and were immediately busy at their station north of London. In addition to coding and decoding the many messages necessary for an invasion of this magnitude, they used any spare time to make radio noise, simply jamming the airwaves to confuse German eavesdroppers and to help maintain the Calais-invasion deception.

Navy Nurse Corps (NNC) women treated patients on hospital ships almost immediately after the invasion began. Martha Gellhorn of *Collier's* defied the rules against press coverage and sneaked aboard the very first. Her story began with the vulnerability that was always the case for nurses:

The ship itself was painfully white. The endless varied ships clotted in this English invasion port were gray or camouflaged ... We, on the other hand, were all fixed up like a sitting pigeon ... We were to travel alone, and there was not so much as a pistol on board ... Everyone knew the Geneva agreement concerning such ships and everyone wistfully hoped that the Germans would take the said agreement seriously ...

We saw the coast of France and suddenly we were in the midst of the armada of the invasion. People will be writing about this sight for a hundred years and whoever saw it will never forget it. First it seemed incredible; there could not be so many ships in the world ... Barrage balloons, always looking like comic toy elephants, bounced in the high wind above the massed ships, and invisible planes droned behind the gray ceiling of cloud. Troops were unloading from big ships to heavy cement barges or to light craft, and on the shore, moving up four brown roads that scarred the hillside, our tanks clanked slowly and steadily forward ...

The first wounded man to be brought to that ship for safety and care was a German prisoner ... It will be hard to tell you of the wounded, there were so many of them. There was no time to talk; there was too much else to do. They had to be fed, as most of them had not eaten for two days; shoes and clothing had to be cut off ...; cigarettes had to be lighted and held for those who could not use their hands; it seemed to take hours to pour hot coffee, via the spout of a teapot, into a mouth that just showed through the bandages.

Gellhorn assisted with this work and translated for doctors who did not have her fluency in German—but army press officers nonetheless punished her for stowing away. Reporters had been ordered to get their stories from the Ministry of Information in London, and most obeyed. Lee Carson of the International News Service, however, broke the rules on the morning of D-Day itself: she simply went to a nearby air base and talked a pilot into allowing her on a plane. Her aerial report of the invasion for the International News Syndicate may have been the first obtained through non-official observation. The *Boston Globe's* Iris Carpenter also violated press restrictions in an ambitious attempt to get the story first. Army Nurse Corps (ANC) women entered France on D-Day plus four, and members of the Women's Army Corps (WAC) would follow them.

German resistance increased after D-Day, and the push to Paris took until August 25. Most WACs would stay in England through the summer, but ANC women were accustomed to working close to combat lines. One of the first ETO nurses was Mary Ferrell, who would go on to win the Bronze Star and five campaign medals, many more decorations than most male soldiers. She told author Diane Burke Fessler:

The 101st crossed the English Channel in LSTs [landing ship tanks], landing at Utah Beach on a pontoon dock. Allied planes patrolled constantly overhead as we went ashore. Soldiers and cargo swarmed over the beach like ants, and everywhere were shattered concrete pillboxes, shell holes, and smashed buildings. The enlisted men from our unit marched several miles, laden with their field equipment, to a transit area to pitch pup tents. The nurses and officers settled in an apple orchard. We slept on our raincoats and shared with a buddy, using her raincoat as cover. During the night we climbed into trucks ... German planes zoomed overhead as searchlights constantly probed the sky and anti-aircraft fire chased the enemy planes.

As the weeks and months went by, other women experienced the Normandy beaches. Army nurse Marjorie LaPalme datelined her October 22 letter “somewhere in Holland” when she finally wrote retrospectively of her arrival. According to editors Litoff and Smith, she explained to her Massachusetts family:

We crossed in a small ship—the stormy channel [sic] and had to climb down over the side on rope ladders. That little tiny landing boat looked so tiny way down there and I am frightened of height, but we had to go down. We were landed on Omaha Beach which shows evidence of battle. A jeep took us up to the top of the cliff. We saw the bombed out German bunkers. Every inch was covered with our boys' blood—that hard fought battle area ... was a sea of thick brown mud.

The Red Cross sent its first “clubmobile” to Normandy in mid-July, when twenty-four of its female employees landed on Utah Beach. Although the nomenclature may make their work sound trivial, these women often provided the first hot food a soldier had in many days. Traveling in the back of a 2-ton truck, they went through barbed wire and wrecked



vehicles to Cherbourg; eventually these women would go with the army's Fifth Corps all the way to Czechoslovakia.

Other civilian women who followed the D-Day invasion were attached to the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the forerunner of today's CIA—indeed, some of them had been there prior to D-Day, hidden in the French underground. Often such spies risked parachuting in at night and then assumed their faux persona the next day. Perhaps more than any other kind of work, the OSS required absolute secrecy—as well as imagination, attention to detail, language ability and geographical knowledge. By D-Day, the London office had thirteen two-person teams, including women, in France and had established radio contact with them. One of the planners, Evangeline Bell, later told author Elizabeth P. McIntosh:

One mistake, and our people could be executed. Their lives depended upon what they wore or carried ... It was our job to transform ordinary Americans into ... French factory workers ... You also had to back up a cover story with tangible proof. A hospital certificate for a recent illness would explain why you were not at work or in the army. A letter from a friend deploring the death of a family member would tell why you had traveled ... OSS New York was asked to search second-hand shops in the Lower East Side for German fountain pens, battered suitcases ... We never knew who the agents were, and only our radio reports from behind the lines indicated that they were in place. It was a terrible responsibility, knowing that one small mistake might cost them their life.

Those radio transmissions would be sent in inexplicable codes, and translating them was the speciality of Gertrude Pearson Cassetta, one of twenty-one enlisted WACs who landed on Omaha Beach on August 28. Even then, the landing still was rough, as they were told by the officer in charge "to find a foxhole in the field above the beach and bivouac there for the night." These women, according to author Gruhzt-Hoyt, were not only "the first air force WACs to arrive in France," but also their unit became "the only instance in the war that a cryptographic section of the Signal Corps was entirely staffed and run by WAC personnel."

Corporal Christine Shanklin was assigned to SHAEF FORWARD, the forward arm of the Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force that Eisenhower headed. She told Gruhzt-Hoyt that after crossing the Channel on September 7:

We were all crowded into trucks and rode for at least an hour and a half over rough, bombed-out roads ... Our headquarters was Jullouville, in a wooded area where German snipers were still lurking. The WACs were billeted in a large building that had formerly been used as a Nazi rest home. I slept on an old dirty canvas cot that was directly below a window that was impossible to close. I had no mattress, sheets, or pillow ... and only one army blanket ... General Eisenhower's office was in a trailer in a secluded area. The other offices ... were scattered over a wide area ... So ... I trudged through the wet and ... muddy terrain.

Circumstances akin to D-Day thus continued, as the Eu-

ropean Theater of Operations moved from London towards Berlin. By the end of summer, the Allies would have more than two million soldiers on the ground, and the whole of Europe was transformed into a battlefield for the next eleven months, until VE-Day came with victory in Europe.

*See also:* **Army Nurse Corps; correspondents, war; cryptography; European Theater of Operations; flight nurses; Gellhorn, Martha; intelligence, military; Navy Nurse Corps; North Africa; Red Cross; Signal Corps; spies; V-E Day; Women's Army Corps**

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## DECORATIONS AND MEDALS

Military tradition long has honored soldiers—and occasionally, civilians—with ribbons, medals, and other insignia to commemorate devotion to a cause. The best known may be the Purple Heart, which was created by George Washington during the American Revolution and now is given to people who die or are injured while in the armed forces. Other decorations vary from the Good Conduct Ribbon to the Congressional Medal of Honor, the most prestigious. Although it no longer involves action by Congress, the Medal of Honor usually is awarded posthumously, after a soldier has given all to save others. Dr. Mary Walker, a surgeon captured by Confederates in the Civil War, was granted this highest honor; since then, no woman has received it.

At the war's beginning attack on Pearl Harbor, thirteen members of the Navy Nurse Corps (NNC) earned the Purple Heart. They had been aboard the *USS Solace* when Japanese bombs began to fall and earned the award for brave performance of their duty while under fire. The first White House ceremony to confer military honors on women was held less than six months later: on June 1, 1942, eighteen nurses were honored; they escaped capture by the Japanese at Bataan and Corregidor in the Philippine Islands. After the outdoor

ceremony with high-ranking military officials and members of Congress, “the nurses were invited to tea with the first lady,” nurse Eunice Hatchitt told author Elizabeth Norman. They were especially impressed that Eleanor Roosevelt addressed them as “lieutenant” rather than the media’s usage of “Miss.”

All but one of these women belonged to the Army Nurse Corps (ANC), and a few days later, the Navy Nurse Corps held a second ceremony to honor its sole representative. Ann Bernatitus became the only NNC member in World War II to receive the Legion of Merit, a newly-created decoration “for exceptionally meritorious” service. Two months later, five NNC members were awarded the ribbons associated with the American Defense Service Medal; the medal itself was unavailable because of wartime metal shortages. These women had been on Guam when it fell: they endured a cold voyage to Japan in January 1942, where they were imprisoned until a diplomat from neutral Sweden arranged for them and other Americans to be exchanged for Japanese prisoners of war. They arrived in New York on August 24, 1942.

Almost three years later, as the Allies were winning the Pacific Theater of Operations (PTO), ANC and NNC women who had not escaped from the Philippines finally were liberated. They were honored in Manila in February of 1945 before coming home. Because they had faced starvation during their captivity, some weighed as little as seventy pounds, and they wore new uniforms flown in from Australia for the ceremony. Each woman also was promoted one rank, and all were presented with the several battle ribbons they were due, as well as the prestigious Bronze Star.

Other Bronze Star winners served on the opposite side of the world, in the European Theater of Operations (ETO). According to *Life*’s Margaret Bourke-White, ANC member Betty Cook was the first woman to earn a Purple Heart on Italian soil: with “her wounded left arm in bandages,” she went back to work, and a few weeks later earned the Bronze Star in the fierce fighting at Anzio. It was awarded for her “meritorious service ... in direct support of combat troops” and made her the first American woman “to wear two decorations.”

The Silver Star is even more prestigious, as its guidelines require that it be awarded only for “gallantry in action against an armed enemy of the United States.” Three nurses earned the Silver Star for the battle of Anzio: Mary Roberts of Dallas, Rita Rourke of Chicago, and Elaine Roe of Whitewater, Wisconsin. Their citation, according to ANC historian Edith Aynes, said that they “carried on unfalteringly” throughout bombing. A fourth, Ellen Ainesworth, of Glenwood City, Wisconsin, received the Silver Star posthumously, and the same was true for nurses Marjorie Morrow, Carrie Sheetz, and Blanche Sigman, who also were killed by German bombs. Sigman, the chief nurse, received the special honor of having a hospital ship named for her—already in May of 1944, after the Anzio victory in February. According to Edith Aynes, Brigadier General Joseph I. Martin said of these women:



Retired Navy nurse Captain Sue Dauser receives the Distinguished Service Medal from Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal for her “exceptionally meritorious service” as Superintendent of the Navy Nurse Corps “during the pre-war period and during World War II, December 1, 1945. *U.S. Navy Photo, Naval Historical Center*

The presence of the nurses on the beachhead constituted a ringing affirmation of our determination to hold what we had ... No enumeration of the elusive factors which enabled our men to hold their ground at Anzio can overlook the role played by the nurses there. Certainly no combat troops who were at Anzio will fail to honor those heroic women, six of whom lie buried side by side with Infantrymen, tank drivers, artillery men and others in the American cemetery on the beachhead.

Frances Slinger, the first nurse to die in the ETO after the D-Day invasion, also had a hospital ship named for her. Slinger, said Aynes, “endeared herself to everybody by a letter she had written to the [military newspaper] *Stars and Stripes* just before her death, praising the American G.I.” Aynes herself later earned the Legion of Merit for her work to improve hospital procedures, but among the earliest recipients of the Legion of Merit was First Lieutenant Maude Carraway of Merriman, North Carolina, who was stationed in Alaska when Japan attacked there. Mary Ann Sullivan may have been the most publicized at the time: she earned the Legion of Merit for her valor in getting out of North Africa’s Kasserine Pass with Germans both ahead of her and behind her.

Legion of Merit recipients in the PTO included four Army nurses who worked through bombing at Pearl Harbor that began the war. They were Captain Helena Clearwater of Kingston, New York; First Lieutenant Elizabeth A. Pesut of Indianapolis; and Second Lieutenants Elma Asson of Los Angeles and Rosalie Swenson of Chicago. Nurse Swenson had been a patient at Tripler Hospital when the bombing began, “but immediately reported in uniform.” The PTO pioneered flight nursing, and ANC flight nurse Aleta Lutz was posthumously honored with the Distinguished Flying Cross. A hospital ship

## DECORATIONS AND MEDALS

also was named for her, and the same honors went to Ernestine Koranda, an ANC member killed in the PTO.

There is some irony in hospital ships being named for Army Nurse Corps women, given that it was Navy Nurse Corps women who worked on them. NNC members, however, did not receive as many honors. Not was it a much smaller corps, but also and especially, they worked under less dangerous circumstances. Most served on hospital ships that had Red Cross immunity to attack, or—even more likely—in stateside hospitals or in places such as Hawaii and England, where they were less in harm's way than ANC women.

This was even more true for the Navy's non-nursing branches: neither WAVES, SPARS, nor Women Marines were permitted to go overseas, and so they received fewer and less prestigious decorations. Members of the two female Army units, the ANC and the Women's Army Corps (WAC), received many more. All WACs were given the WAC Service Medal at the end of their duty, and more than six hundred earned major medals. Over sixteen hundred Army nurses received medals by the war's end—but more than two hundred had died.

Elite decorations also went to women who were not necessarily near the front, but who rendered important services. The top award is the Distinguished Service Medal (DSM), which can be given even to civilians: suffragists Anna Howard Shaw and Carrie Chapman Catt, for example, received it for their support of World War I. All the women who headed World War II's new military corps earned the DSM, and it also was awarded the chiefs of the older nursing corps, the ANC's Florence Blanchfield and the NNC's Sue Dauser.

Because the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) was not an official part of the military, its commander, Jacqueline Cochran, became the first civilian woman to receive the DSM in World War II. Most of the WASP's thirty-eight fatalities, however, never were properly honored; their paramilitary status was so unrecognized that fellow pilots sometimes had to take up collections to pay for shipping their bodies home. The other shameful gap in recognitions was for Red Cross nurses, especially those who volunteered prior to American entrance into the war. They endured torpedoing on the *Maasdam* and other ships, but because they were civilians, received no decorations. Similarly, the (many more) civilian women who were Japanese prisoners of war got no awards—nor even much attention.

Because the Army has defined systems and the personnel to keep records, WAC historian Mattie Treadwell could summarize its decorations as of 1947. She listed one Distinguished Service Medal, the one that went to commander Oveta Culp Hobby, while sixty-two WACs received the Legion of Merit, the next-highest decoration. Among them were the "Nine Old Women," the WAC's founding officers, as well as other women who headed the WAC in the ETO, PTO, and other theaters. Some earned more than one major decoration for service on more than one front: Mary A. Hallaren, for example, received three awards of the Legion of Merit, as well as the Bronze Star.

The WAC had 565 Bronze Stars recipients, but they var-

ied tremendously by geographical assignment. WACs in the ETO, where top commander Dwight David Eisenhower truly appreciated women's abilities, received by far the most: 305 WACs there were granted the Bronze Star. The Mediterranean Theater, where Lt. General Mark Clark commanded the first WACs who went overseas, was second with 134 Bronze Stars. In the PTO, however, commander Douglas MacArthur was more conservative, and a mere 96 were granted. Treadwell summarized:

Although Pacific Wacs had moved more rapidly and lived longer under field conditions than those in Europe, they received [fewer decorations] ... There existed some feeling that Bronze Stars and similar awards were inappropriate for women. One WAC sergeant [Dorothy Pat Costello] noted that identical recommendations were forwarded by her section chief for herself and for the men under her supervision, but that only the men's were approved.

All Bronze Star women had interesting tales to tell, but perhaps the most unusual was that of Barbara Lauwers, a WAC born in Czechoslovakia. Because she had a law degree and spoke several languages, the WAC assigned her to the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the forerunner of today's CIA. She served in dangerous situations in southern Europe and earned the Bronze Star for her leadership in persuading more than six hundred men to desert the German army. Army nurse Mary Ferrell is another example: she not only won the Bronze Star, but also five medals for meritorious service in the ETO. *Saturday Evening Post* featured the February 1945 ceremony that honored her in Arlon, Belgium.

Another variable in whether a woman was decorated could be the nature of her work. "Air WACs" were an informal category of the Women's Army Corps: the public used this term for WACs who were assigned to the Army Air Force, in an era when the Air Force was not yet a separate military service. Although Air WACs were new and only semi-official, some earned medals specific to that service. The first family to receive an Air Medal because of the death of a female member, for instance, was that of Private Majory Linheart Babinetz, whose Pennsylvania family was given it because of her 1944 death during a recruitment aviation show over Stillwater, Oklahoma.

About the same time, Air WAC Emma Jane Burrows Windham earned a Purple Heart for injuries sustained during 1944 buzz bombing in England; when she later was killed in a mid-air collision there, her family received further decorations. Similarly, WAC Helen Greene Kent received medals when her Army Air Force husband was shot down in Europe; two years later, her family would receive honors after she lost her own life in a New Guinea plane crash. A WAC in India received the Air Medal for her cartography in creating maps of the dangerous area called "The Hump." Another, according to Treadwell, earned both the Air Medal and the Legion of Merit for her "regular flying duty" out of Shanghai. Nancy Harkness Love, who founded the first paramilitary aviation squadron, was unique in receiving the Air Medal at the same time as her husband, Colonel Robert Love.



Occasionally an entire unit earned decorations. One such was the 6669th WAC platoon headed by Captain Cora M. Foster in the Italian campaign. Treadwell said that “they lived in whatever billets were available—schools, factories, apartments, and chiefly tents ..., spending most of the winter of 1944–45 in tents in the mountains above Florence.” Lt. General Mark Clark honored the unit with the Fifth Army Plaque in 1944 and again in 1945 with the Meritorious Service Unit Plaque; this entitled the women to wear the Fifth Army’s distinctive green scarf.

The War Department also occasionally recognized civilians. It gave its highest possible honor, the Distinguished Service Medal, to Anne Marie Young, an African American, for her courage in saving lives when the Chemical Warfare Arsenal in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, exploded in 1943. Alene Erlanger, the founder of Dogs for Defense, also was given this honor in 1945. In addition, the War Department routinely coordinated with defense industry executives to grant awards for high productivity and low absenteeism.

Governments of other nations also gave important decorations to exceptional Americans. Congresswoman Frances Bolton, for example, was granted the Legion of Honor by the French government, which did the same for her journalist Helen Kirkpatrick and United Nations planner Virginia Gildersleeve. Therese Bonney had received this honor before the war began, and when Germany took over France, the French government-in-exile gave Bonney an even more prestigious award, the *Croix de Guerre*; Finland honored her with its White Rose for her courageous coverage of the Soviet invasion there. In 1947, Norway decorated Daisy Harriman, who headed the U.S. embassy there when the Nazis invaded in 1940. Sweden, of course, awards the internationally known Nobel Prizes, and at the war’s end, American Emily Greene Balch earned the Nobel Peace Prize, partly for her work with refugees.

The U.S. government, too, sometimes decorates foreigners who have rendered valuable aid. The first woman to be honored with a review of cadets at West Point, the nation’s oldest military academy, was Maria Gulovich. Born in Slovakia to a Greek Orthodox family, she was a young schoolteacher when Nazis took over, and her first act of defiance was to hide a Jewish woman and her child. Gulovich repeatedly risked her life to assist agents of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the forerunner of today’s CIA. She was just twenty-four years old in May 1946, when she was decorated at West Point by OSS chief Major General William J. Donovan.

The Presidential Medal of Freedom is a postwar creation that is awarded by the White House, not the military. Women have received it more often than the top military awards, but its recipients have varied greatly depending on the thoughtfulness of the administration. Some have gone to women who demonstrated true courage in the interminable fight for freedom, while other presidents have diminished its value by awarding it merely to their favorite entertainers.

In contrast, the military’s Distinguished Service Cross is second in prestige only to the Congressional Medal of Honor. One of very few women to receive the cross was Baltimore

native Virginia Hall, a civilian who spent most of her career in Europe. President Harry Truman granted it for the many risks Hall took to organize resistance to Nazis in occupied France. Even decades later, American allies, especially France, continue to recognize World War II women. On June 6, 2007, the 63rd anniversary of D-Day, the French government bestowed its Legion of Honor on eighty-six-year-old Katherine Nolan, who was a lieutenant when she landed in Normandy. According to an Associated Press article, French Consul General Philippe Vinogradoff said, “My people remember the sacrifices these soldiers made for us.”

*See also:* **absenteeism; African-American women; Air WACs; Army Nurse Corps; Balch, Emily Greene; Bataan; Blanchfield, Florence; Bolton, Frances; Bonney, Therese; Bourke-White, Margaret; Cochran, Jacqueline; Corregidor; Dauser, Sue; D-Day; defense industries; Dogs for Defense; European Theater of Operations; flight nurses; Gildersleeve, Virginia; Hall, Virginia; Hallaren, Mary; Harriman, Daisy; hospitals; Kent, Helen Greene; Kirkpatrick, Helen; Love, Nancy Harkness; males, comparisons with; Marines, Women; Navy Nurse Corps; North Africa; Pacific Theater of Operations; Pearl Harbor; prisoners of war; recruitment; refugees; SPARS; spies; Red Cross; Roosevelt, Eleanor; V-E Day; WAVES; WASP; Women’s Army Corps**

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## DEFENSE INDUSTRIES

"This is the record," summarized Donald Nelson, chairman of the War Production Board, at its end:

For nine years before Pearl Harbor, Germany, Italy, and Japan prepared themselves intensively for war, while as late as 1940 the war production of peaceful America was virtually nothing. Yet two years later, the output of our war factories equaled that of the Axis nations combined. In 1943 our war production was one and one half times as much, and in 1944, more than double Axis production—a remarkable demonstration of power.

To understand the magnitude of World War II's defense industries, consider simply the number of government-issued supplies that the lowliest of soldiers took with him into combat. Even in the most stripped-down of situations, the era's infantryman wore and bore dozens of individual items—and women played a role in creating almost all of them. From the buttons on his uniform to the shoelaces on his combat boots to the strap on his metal helmet, women probably worked on everything he wore. They may have grown the sheep that provided the wool for his socks or picked the cotton for his underwear; they undoubtedly worked in the textile mills that made these into fabric and in the garment factories that turned the fabric into clothing. They did the same with his blanket, pup tent, gas mask, canteen, and the duffel bag that held all this and more.

That women grew and preserved and packed the food (and cigarettes) in his rations is traditionally seen as "women's work"—but they also likely were on the assembly line that made his rifle; they almost certainly packed his ammunition from powder into bullets, and they may have fired his weaponry to test it. The ship that took him overseas probably was riveted by women, and the fighter planes that protected it also were assembled in a plant staffed with women. They worked on everything from painting the tiny radium dials of those planes to packing the parachutes that allowed its occupants to float downwards. They made the life jackets and rubber rafts that might save his life in a shipwreck, and they made the torpedoes intended to sink an enemy ship or submarine. While upwards of ten million American men went to war, almost twice that number of women were in the labor force.

"The first thing to do to win the war," famed writer Dorothy Parker told her sophisticated audience, "is to lose your amateur standing." Although the work that most women would do was unsophisticated and even unskilled by industrial definitions, it was definitely not amateurish. The standard work week was six days of eight hours each, with only Sundays off. Many women worked more than those forty-eight

hours, with fifty-three hours per week not uncommon—or almost two days more per week than the current average. Vacations and most holidays were canceled for the duration. The endless work—most of it interminably repetitious and boring—stretched out on an infinite assembly line far into the dim and unknown future. Most of what women built was intended for destruction, but no one could predict how much would have to be built and destroyed and replaced again before the madness of war would finally end.

As women went from housework and school teaching and sales clerking to war work, so was industry reborn. Factories converted, in the words of Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins, from "lingerie to camouflage netting; from baby carriages to field-hospital food carts; from lipstick cases to bomb fuses ... from ribbons and silk goods to parachutes; from beer cans to hand grenades ... from vacuum cleaners to gas-masks." Many of the canceled products were items that women were most likely to miss—but that loss was minor compared with the needs of their loved ones at risk, and millions of women willingly became "production soldiers" in a multiplicity of defense plants

Aircraft manufacture probably was the most visible and most progressive in its treatment of these new female employees. In 1940, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt requested 50,000 new planes during the next year, most "experts" pronounced this impossible—but by 1944, the United States was producing 120,000 planes annually. It was women who made the difference: while fascist Germany and Japan clung to their conservative ideas on women's proper place, American women were strongly encouraged to take these new jobs by both the government and the aircraft industry.

Enough women had worked on planes in World War I that already some industrial analysts had noticed the analogies between cutting a dress from a paper pattern and cutting plane parts on a drill-press pattern, between sewing the dress pieces together and riveting a plane together. Because the industry was relatively new, it was largely accepting of new workers and fairly enlightened on matters of pay and working conditions. Within two years of U.S. entrance into the war, almost a half-million American women were building planes.

Many moved to the West Coast to do so. Although St. Louis also was a large center for aircraft manufacture, most planes were built on the West Coast, where the large tracts of land that huge aircraft plants needed was more likely to be available and also where the finished planes could be easily shipped to the Pacific. The result was boom towns, especially around Los Angeles, where people packed into any available housing near the plants. Because housing resources were going into military needs, it was almost impossible to rent or buy a home around these places—and at the same time, gasoline and tires were rationed, so one could not live very far away.

Despite these real problems, however, hundreds of thousands of women found a way to take these jobs. Moreover, they did quality work. Aviation expert Don Wharton, for example, said that Seattle-based Boeing was surprised to discover that



This woman is working on a floatation device that might save the life of some sailor or shot-down pilot adrift on high seas. *Courtesy of Franklin D. Roosevelt Library; Hyde Park, NY*

it almost doubled its output of B-17 bombers during the first year that nearly half of its male employees were replaced by “completely inexperienced women.” At Lockheed, two African-American women who had been on the job for just a year set an all-time record for riveting speed.

The same sewing analogies apply to shipbuilding, but probably because that industry is ancient, its men were much more resistant to women. Shipyards, too, generally were older, smaller, and more spread out along coastlines—all factors that mitigate against a new, cooperative, and national perspective. Much more than with aircraft manufacturers, the federal government had to use its contracts with shipbuilders to insist that they hire all of the labor available to them. As a result, women and racial minorities got jobs they otherwise would not have gotten, and from Maine down through Maryland and around the Gulf from Tampa to Mobile to Galveston, women went to work building ships and submarines. Again the most enlightened employers were on the West Coast, where especially the Kaiser shipyards around Portland led the way with innovations in child care and other supportive services.

In contrast to the 36 women working in the industry when Europe erupted in war in 1939, there would be some 23,000 American women employed by shipyards in early 1943, with predictions of 225,000 by the end of the next year. Many endured sexual harassment, but again they proved their worth. One of the most telling testimonies was from Josephine von Miklos, who wrote an investigative book on defense industries after taking a series of jobs. At a Connecticut shipyard, she said, women were “out there ... in biting gales and icy planks ... A hundred men walked out on one of those coldest days. The girls stuck.”

Munitions manufacture also is an old industry, but women had been more historically involved with it than with shipbuilding. Some had made bullets over their kitchen hearths

during early American warfare, and female skills in this area were rediscovered during World War I. From the earliest days of World War II, munitions manufacturers actually preferred hiring women to men, explaining that women had proven themselves to be more cautious about handling explosives. Women were expected to concentrate better on the important details of quality and less likely to give into distractions that could have fatal results.

Gun manufacture historically was centered in New England, where companies such as Winchester, Remington, and Colt long had made weapons. Even before the war began, for example, *New York Times* reporter Frank Adams wrote that Connecticut “lifted its ban on women working night shifts” because Winchester executives informed the governor “that cartridge inspection was a ‘natural woman’s job’ that could not be done nearly so well by men.” Women also tested guns, including firing big artillery weapons at places such as Maryland’s Aberdeen Proving Grounds.

Most of all, though, they made billions of rounds of ammunition for machine guns and rifles. Women worked on everything from bullets for small pistols to giant bombs dropped by planes and huge torpedoes fired by ships and submarines. Usually the plants that produced these explosives were built in rural areas where an accident would do the least harm—but where living conditions for women recruited there often were crowded and inhospitable. They worked behind heavy metal walls built to contain a fire and followed many rules. Their tasks were both dangerous and tedious—but because women were more likely to be working exclusively with each other, there was less sexual harassment than in other defense industries.

In addition to preferring women because of their record for safety and quality, a second reason for hiring them was that manufacturers had discovered that they could pay them





A New Hampshire woman employed by the Department of Agriculture works in a sawmill, as timber was still another wartime need. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

less than men. This lower pay also meant that more African-American women got jobs in munitions plants than was the case with shipyards or aircraft manufacture. It is possible, too, that the industry employed more than the usual number of minorities because it was, in fact, the most dangerous. The Chemical Warfare Arsenal at Pine Bluff, Arkansas, for example, exploded twice in one year. According to writer Kathryn Blood, an African-American worker there, Anne Marie Young, received the War Department's highest civilian honor for her courage in rescuing others. At Elkton, Maryland, a fire in May of 1943 killed fifteen "production soldiers" and wounded fifty-four others.

In addition to these industries, women worked in other non-traditional jobs that were basic to the war. The steel mills of Gary, Indiana, for example, employed women in more than twenty job categories. *Life* correspondent Margaret Bourke-White, briefly back from her worldwide war coverage, took time to highlight these steel-working women:

The length of this [job category] list is especially significant because before Pearl Harbor, virtually the only women employed...were the sorters in the tin mills ... The women steel workers at Gary are not freaks or novelties ... In time of peace they may return once more to home and family, but they have proved that in time of crisis, no job is too tough for American women.

*Business Week* agreed that "the hand that wields the powder puff ... [is] also able to swing a heavy sledge," as it reported on the increase of women in mining: it even told of a female school principal who had moved to an isolated mining town for the higher wages offered. Women also unloaded

freight trains, stacked cargo in warehouses, and washed train cars in the cold and mud. Although the government had to push the railroad industry to hire them in the same way that it did with shipyards, that proved effective: between 1943 and 1944, the hiring rate rose 68 percent, with 106,000 women working on the railroads. On the other hand, just 18 of the industry's top 14,385 management jobs were held by women—most of whom had been hired in World War I.

Although few women got a chance for promotions and almost all had abilities that were underutilized, the "Rosie the Riveters" of defense plants were absolutely vital to victory. There had been 13 million women in the 1940 work force, or about 24 percent of the adult female population, and by 1945, when the war ended, 21.2 million women had entered the labor market—or more than two of every five women in the nation. Some gave their lives: approximately 37,000 workers died in industrial accidents during the war years, while another 210,000 were permanently disabled.

Despite this huge contribution to winning the war and preserving the national economy, female employment would be relatively brief. Many factories converted to civilian production when the war ended, and, for example, women who built tanks in Detroit no longer would be welcome when veterans returned to build cars. Other industries, particularly munitions, understandably decreased production and laid off workers with the least seniority. Shipyards and aircraft manufacturers, too, would find that government contracts ended with the war's end, and without that affirmative-action push, they reverted to old hiring patterns. Soon much of the public would forget that women ever had built bombers.

If they had not, however, it is much more likely that the AI-

lies would have lost the war. Certainly Hitler's proclamation that German women's lives should revolve around "kinder, kuchen, and kirke" [children, kitchen, and church] proved to be a factor in his ultimate demise. Instead of encouraging his female supporters to take jobs, Nazi war production very much depended upon slave labor, on the unwilling work of people forced into fascists factories. Concentration camp workers understandably did everything they could to sabotage German production—and the Allies' spy network knew about this from its beginning. The Office of Strategic Services (OSS) hired Toni Sender, a member of Germany's parliament who fled from Hitler, and already in 1941, according to author Elizabeth McIntosh, an escaped forced laborer "revealed sabotage slowdown tactics" to Sender's Swiss contacts. "The workforce" at Hamburg's shipyards, the refugee said, "had built only five submarines ... although they could have easily built ten in that time."

In contrast, British women toiled tirelessly to win the war and demonstrated how much women were capable of doing. They accepted a draft of their labor for defense industries when that tiny island stood alone against the world, going where they were assigned to do what needed to be done. American women never were drafted for industrial work—although there were serious proposals to do so, especially with the Austin-Wadsworth Bill. Instead, they individually insisted that they be hired, voluntarily donned overalls and brogans, and helped bring victory.

*See also:* **absenteeism; aircraft workers; Austin-Wadsworth Bill; boom towns; British women; cigarettes; child care; housing; males, comparisons with; munitions industry; spies; pay; rationing; recruitment; teachers; Perkins, Frances; shipbuilding**

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## DEMOBILIZATION

Demobilization refers to the huge discharge of military personnel, most of them male, who served in the war. Unlike today, when individuals enlist in the military for a specific period of time, everyone in World War II served "for the duration." Thus literally millions of soldiers and sailors expected to be dismissed when the war formally ended in September, 1945—but bringing them all home at the same time obviously was not possible, even in terms of simply providing transportation. Demobilization was further complicated by the fact that armies would continue to occupy Germany and Japan, and they needed to be large enough to ensure that no resurrection of fascism occurred.

A point system for discharge was set up that primarily was based on time served, but it also took into consideration such factors as whether or not one been in combat, what one's family needs were, and more. Men who were fathers, for instance, were discharged prior to those who were not, while unmarried men who had served for less the length of the war were most likely to be retained. A married woman thus was more likely to see her husband sooner than would the mother of an unmarried son—but all of this could vary greatly depending upon geographical station, occupational status, transportation availability, and even an individual's relationship with commanding officers.

Those without sufficient points for discharge could petition and sometimes win an early release. Army nurse Louise Dumond Kopchak, for example, had married in England soon after D-Day, when her fiancé became an amputee. He was discharged and sent back to the United States, and when the war in Europe ended, and according to author Diane Fessler, she successfully petitioned for early discharge to join him.

More than many other things, the dismissal experience seems to have varied for male and female veterans. Most of both sexes looked forward to returning to civilian life, but because many men had been drafted or enlisted only because of the threat of being drafted, they frequently were more eager to get out of the service. Although, of course, there were many exceptions, women—who joined voluntarily—were more likely to be ambivalent. The military had offered them unprecedented career and travel options, and because they knew the reality of employment discrimination against women, some feared the loss of such opportunity and preferred to stay in the military.

Their ambivalence did not matter, though, because when the armed forces downsized at the war's end, all non-nursing women's corps were scheduled for abolition. Yet, because Congress had many other issues to debate, and especially because the War Department itself turned out to be unexpectedly ambivalent about ending the women's branches, the question would remain unsettled for most of three years. Until Congress finally passed the Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948, women who wanted to stay in the military simply hung in abeyance, temporarily forced out but hoping to get back in.

Even in the opposite situation, however, when a woman was eager to leave the service and return to her former life, the discharge experience nonetheless was often a letdown. Women were less than 5 percent of the total forces, which meant that they often were overlooked in great mass of returning men. Many agreed with Grace Porter Miller, a member of the Women's Army Corps (WAC) who said that after her long and sometimes painful experience in the European Theater of Operations:

At the dock in New York, there were bands, proud speeches, and applause for "our fighting men." No mention whatsoever was made of the returning women, and we all felt brushed aside, ignored. However, we were tired—and it was so good to be home!... Long tables were set up ... by the Red Cross. We were served a huge breakfast with all the foods we had missed for so long ... The only problem was that ... our stomachs were not used to this food, so it was inevitable that many of us became very sick even after small helpings.

As was the case with many women, the free food was all she got: no one made her aware of the GI Bill or other benefits to which she was entitled, and worse, the American Legion in her Iowa hometown actively snubbed her attempt to join. The memoirs of dozens of female veterans repeatedly say that no one debriefed them or helped them transition back to the civilian economy. They spent decades unaware that they

were eligible for veterans' benefits in housing, education, and civil service jobs, and more.

Like male veterans, female ones also enjoyed a theoretical right to return to their prewar civilian jobs—but much more than men, who often returned to well-paid jobs in unionized blue-collar industries, many women no longer wanted their prewar place. Most never had a chance to use their real abilities, and stereotypical "women's work" certainly would not acknowledge the skills and experience they had acquired in the military. Whole categories of knowledge became irrelevant in the civilian economy, as there were no laws against employment discrimination: personnel managers were free to simply declare that they did not hire women as air traffic controllers, mechanics, carpenters, photographers, or any number of occupational slots that women had successfully performed in the military.

Even in white-collar jobs that required no physical strength, women found their military work experience was discounted by employers. A *New York Times* story featured a disbursing officer who had been responsible for \$50 million a month, but could not convince potential employers that this was real money. Her experience was not atypical:

In one voice, the girls of the Wac, Waves, Spars and Marines complain that prospective employers completely disregard their two or three years' experience in the services. Some employers even count it against them, the women veterans believe. One veteran reported when she applied for a position as a physiotherapist, at work she had done before and during service, the employing doctor was shocked to learn that she had been in the Army.

Two thirds of a group of 150 women veterans who met recently at the New York Veterans Service Center felt that they had been discriminated against by employers. Most had found themselves barred from professional fields in which they had some training in the service.

If this was the case with the well-publicized female corps, the hurdles were huge for women whose service had been deliberately obscured in semi-secret or paramilitary units. WAC Barbara Lauwers, for instance, had been born in Czechoslovakia, had a law degree, and spoke several languages, and the WAC therefore assigned her to the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the forerunner of today's CIA. She served in dangerous situations in southern Europe and earned the Bronze Star for her leadership in causing more than six hundred Czech men to desert the German army. Yet, according to biographer Elizabeth McIntosh, when the war in Europe ended, Lauwers was given a choice between two years in Austria as a civilian employee or immediate repatriation to the United States.

She opted for repatriation ... Lauwers' ship put in at the Boston port of debarkation. No one met her: her husband had divorced her during the war. She worked at a number of jobs: selling hats, working as a dental assistant ...

Far too many women with brilliant credentials faced similarly sad situations. Isolated from the mass of men, they



were lonely in the crowd of returning Americans. Their skills and experience too often were ignored or even arrogantly discounted as not quite real. For them, demobilization could come close to meaning de-habilitation, destruction of self-esteem, and dismissal in a hurtful sense.

**See also:** **benefits, military; European Theater of Operations; GI Bill of Rights; males, comparisons with; Marines, Women; rank; Red Cross; SPARS; veterans; underutilization; WAVES; Women's Armed Services Integration Act; Women's Army Corps**

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## DES MOINES, FORT

The very first facility for the new women in the U.S. military nicely symbolized the transition from the outdated to the modern: Iowa's Fort Des Moines had been a cavalry camp, a place for training and housing horses. This function clearly was no longer needed, now that tanks and trucks had replaced horses on battlefields, but the peacetime regular army had used the stately old post as a polo grounds, and some were reluctant to give it up. Indeed, according to television journalist David Brinkley, as late as 1941, the Army's cavalry chief testified to a congressional committee of his belief that "four mounted cavalymen, spaced one hundred yards apart, could charge half a mile across an open field and destroy an enemy machine gun nest without injury to themselves."

Most military leaders were more sensible, and the locale was activated for women as soon as the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC) was authorized on May 15, 1942. Working with a female advisory board and with leaders in both the War Department and Congress, WAAC Director Oveta Culp Hobby identified Fort Des Moines and helped set up the training that women would receive there. Anticipating that the organization soon would expand globally and go far beyond this first basic-training site, she and her top staff head-

quartered in Washington, D.C. The fort's initial commander, Colonel Don Faith, and his staff were men with experience in basic training, or "boot camp," and they supervised the new women both in and out of the classroom.

The first recruits they trained were truly exceptional students. Fort Des Moines' first officer-candidate class consisted of 440 women chosen from more than 13,000 who applied on the very first morning that enlistment opened. Because they were intended to be officers in command of this unprecedented organization, they were older and far better educated than the average soldier. In addition, because Director Hobby was committed to racial equity, it included outstanding African-American women. The class was a wholly new thing for jaded military men, one of whom, a corporal, soon observed that on this post, master's degrees were "as common as corporal stripes." He added for the benefit of *Ladies Home Journal* readers: "I don't think anybody, anywhere ever got together any such bunch of women for any purpose whatsoever."

So stellar was that first class that many students scored 100 percent on the standard army tests; in a course on transportation record-keeping, for example, any average below 96 percent became a B. One male instructor, a longtime sergeant, said in *Collier's*: "In all the years I've been in, I never saw a bunch of men rookies that caught on so quick ... You can't make them complain." Colonel Faith told *Time* that he had just one problem: the women "work too hard." They studied overtime, "risking demerits for reading under the red EXIT lights in the barracks after taps."

In addition to class work, of course, they marched and drilled and lived a boot-camp life much akin to that of male recruits. *Newsweek* reporter Vera Clay offered this daily schedule of her incognito experience at Fort Des Moines:

- |        |   |
|--------|---|
| 6 AM   | Cannon shot to wake you                                     |
| 6:17   | Lights glare on in barracks                                 |
| 6:30   | After a masterful struggle you are dressed and at attention |
| 7      | March to mess   |
| 7:30   | Make beds, wash latrines, dust, police grounds              |
| 8-12   | Classes and close-order drill                               |
| 12     | More chow   |
| 1-4:30 | Classes and physical education                              |
| 5-5:30 | Mess  |
| 9      | Lights out in barracks                                      |
| 11     | Bed check (and you had better be there)                     |

Those beds had to be perfectly made for inspections, and although some of these well-educated women privately believed that the army's arbitrary rules did nothing to help win the war, most seemed to value the new experience. Military discipline did change lifelong habits, and officer training was especially designed to imbue a sense of responsibility for those under one's authority. When, for example, Mary Johnston visited her home after Fort Des Moines' basic

training, the family maid was astonished at the way the new lieutenant made her bed and hung up her clothes—something she never had done as a debutante.

Margaret Flint came from a much less privileged background, but the military training style is democratic in its dictatorial treatment of all new recruits, and she was surprised at how well the many types of women quickly fit together. Amazed at Fort Des Moines' diversity, Flint said that she couldn't "imagine circumstances under which one would meet and know at close range a more varied assortment of women."

One is a colored dental surgeon of many years' experience. I have mentioned the judge with whom I played KP. I've come in contact with several lawyers, many more teachers and nurses, and newspaper women, one of whom has also been a scenario writer in Hollywood. There are scores of librarians, secretaries, clerks and waitresses ... There are debutantes ... I know two girls who were employed breaking eggs in a dehydrating plant.

When she "played KP" with the judge, Flint was speaking of the equality imposed during basic training with "kitchen police," when everyone took her turn at peeling potatoes or hosing down the kitchen floor. Perhaps because other women were doing the cooking, most women also spoke favorably of Fort Des Moines' chow—after the very beginning, when WAACs rejected the lady-luncheon menus that the army had arranged especially for them. The calorie count was adjusted upwards, to match their active lives, and Jane Pollack, who wrote at length about her Fort Des Moines experience, mentioned a tasty meal at the mess hall every few pages. Because of unemployment, Margaret Flint had been so underweight before enlisting that she had to stay in bed to gain the WAAC's 105-pound minimum, but after a few months, she worried about fitting into her uniform.

It was, in fact, uniforms—or the lack of them—that were Pollack's chief complaint. Because garment factories were busy sewing millions of uniforms, they would be slow to arrive in all of the new women's military services. At Fort Des Moines, this was especially a problem. The first recruits arrived in Iowa's brief summer, and soon the civilian clothes they brought were inadequate. By then, Pollock and other early trainees had been displaced from the fort by new recruits: so many women wanted to join the WAAC that the post's barracks were full, and women who were close to graduation were transferred to hotels and apartments in downtown Des Moines. "Today," she wrote:

We were all called in [to the fort] and presented with one pair of leather gloves apiece ... The heat is on at last, so we are not so desperate ... The girls from the Fort say it is terribly cold out there and they don't have sweaters yet either. But they do have winter bathrobes—all size 18!

Such problems eventually worked themselves out, and women continued to enlist. By the time that its "auxiliary" status was dropped and the WAAC became the WAC in 1943, there were more centers for basic training. The second opened

at Daytona Beach, Florida, late in 1942, and the third began soon afterwards at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia. All officer training was transferred to Oglethorpe, while Des Moines and Daytona did only basic training for enlisted women. By then, too, Colonel Don Faith—whose faith in women's abilities truly was essential for the WAAC's success—had moved on with his career. The army was not yet ready to put a woman in command at Fort Des Moines, however, and Colonel Frank McCoskrie ended up with the assignment, even though he avowedly tried hard "to get out of it." In an article for *American Magazine* late in 1943, he continued:

Today, after watching some 40,000 or more women pass through ... I've been completely convinced ... Partly because they are volunteers and mostly because they are women, they have an enormous personal pride and an acute sense of responsibility for the good name of the company ... You won't find the name of a single WAC on the police blotter of the city of Des Moines. I defy you to duplicate that record in any other city adjacent to a camp where as many as 11,000 troops are stationed.

McCoskrie continued to command the fort when Elizabeth Strayhorn returned there at the war's end to lead its WAC program. She had set the precedent of a female commandant at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, and when the WAC program there demobilized in September 1945, she took charge of it at Fort Des Moines. It was officially the corps' "First Training Center;" Daytona was the second and Oglethorpe the third—and briefly, there also were two others, at Fort Devons, Massachusetts and a badly planned one on the border of Arkansas and Louisiana. The latter was created over Hobby's objections, and its miserable life was short; relatively few WACs trained at either.

Virtually all of the women who went on to leadership positions in the Army trained at Fort Des Moines, and the historic Iowa locale is justifiably considered the most important facility for pioneer women in the military.

**See also:** African-American women; cryptographers; Daytona Beach; enlistment standards; food; Hobby, Oveta Culp; kitchen police; North Africa; prisoners of war; recruitment; Strayhorn, Elizabeth; uniforms; Women's Army Auxiliary Corps

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## DEWSON, MOLLY (1874–1962)

The prophecy written by her 1897 Wellesley College classmates predicted that Molly Dewson would be the first female president of the United States. This was more than two decades before most American women could vote; and more than a century later, no woman has achieved that. Mary Williams Dewson, however, was one of the first women whose political advice was part of White House routine.

Affluent enough that she could spend her life working for the less privileged, Dewson published one of the first formal efforts in consumerism, *Twentieth Century Expense Book* (1899), just two years after graduation. She broadened from social work to political action, and as the executive secretary of the Massachusetts Minimum Wage Commission, was largely responsible for the 1912 enactment of the nation's first minimum-wage law.

When the United States entered World War I, Dewson went overseas to work with refugees and was the American Red Cross chief for its Mediterranean zone. Women finally achieved the vote soon after her return to the United States, and Dewson settled in New York City, where she led a successful effort for state laws to protect women from workplace abuses. It was in this role that she met Democrats Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, who immediately recognized her innate political skills.

She led the national effort to organize women for Democratic nominee Al Smith's campaign in 1928, but the nation was not yet ready for a Catholic president. Two years later, however, Dewson played a major role in Franklin Roosevelt's election as governor of New York—and two years after that, he entered the White House in a landslide. She went with him as the first female employee of a political party with personal access to the president.

It was the first Democratic administration in the twelve years since women had won the vote, and she used her position to see that Roosevelt appointed hundreds of women to offices—the most visible of whom was Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins, the first woman on the Cabinet. Dewson also insisted on equal numbers of male and female delegates at

national Democratic conventions, and by the 1940 election, political hacks were astonished to realize that she had given professional training in grass-roots electoral skills to more than one hundred thousand women. Among the instructions she gave these volunteers, according to Eleanor Roosevelt, was: "don't forget the women with the dirty-faced children on the wrong side of the tracks."

Those women and their local campaign networks were a primary reason why President Roosevelt succeeded in being elected to unprecedented third and fourth terms—which, in turn, was a strong factor in the ultimate World War II victory. Fascists such as Hitler, whose view of women's proper place was limited to church and home, would have much preferred the disruption of a new White House occupant during the war. They would have been even more thrilled with a president who did not encourage women to play such a large part in government and industry, and whose wife was not seen as a global traveler for democratic values. Dewson's trainees helped prevent this possibility in both the 1940 and 1944 elections.

But because her expertise was partisan and wartime unity called for a diminishment of that, and also because she was in increasingly poor health, Dewson's wartime role was limited. Her last major service began in 1937, when was the first woman on the new Social Security Board. She had played a strong part in writing the legislation that created Social Security, and given its vital importance to older women today, that may have been the most valuable of Molly Dewson's many contributions to American life. She retired to Maine in her late sixties and died in the same year as her friend Eleanor Roosevelt, 1962.

*See also:* Perkins, Frances; Red Cross; refugees; Roosevelt, Eleanor

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## DIETICIANS

Nutritional science came into widespread public awareness during the World War II era. Although the Department of Agriculture had authorized nutritional research in 1894, the field grew slowly—probably because it was associated with women, many of whom lacked academic credentials, and because the medical profession long spurned its value. Formation of the American Home Economics Association in 1908 helped bring attention, but decades passed before the field moved from a womanly art, with knowledge accumulated





Army dietitian Lieutenant Audry Oliver, Naples, Italy, September 1943. Courtesy of *Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

through observation, to a more masculine science, with measurable laboratory results. Technology had to advance to the point that it could verify women's kitchen lore, so that, for example, the word "vitamin" was not coined until 1911—even though many female authors demonstrated their understanding of the existence of such long before then.

During the Civil War, especially Union women valiantly battled the Quartermaster Corps for decent food for soldiers, but most men existed on a diet of coffee, beans, and hardtack. It was World War I that began to boost recognition of nutrition—ironically, by revealing how much malnutrition, in fact, existed. America's affluent were shocked at the number of men who failed the army's physical examinations. It was especially appalling because many of those rejected were suffering from conditions such as rickets, beri-beri, scurvy, and pellagra, which are wholly preventable with proper diet. The problem was especially acute among urban immigrants: in Europe, these women naturally fed their children a balanced diet from their vegetable gardens and fruit trees, but in American cities, many deemed these items too expensive.

The same was true of milk, and far too many children thus grew up with fragile bones. When the Great Depression followed World War I, malnutrition grew even in rural areas. Especially in the impoverished South of the 1930s, thousands died annually from pellagra, which is caused by a diet heavy on corn with too little of anything else.

The military certainly had an interest in developing young men healthy enough to endure the rigors of warfare, but its leadership was slow to accept the possibility that "home economists" had anything to teach them. As with many other things, First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt played a strong role in connecting these seemingly disparate groups of people. Indeed, many thought her obsessed with nutrition: even before the United States entered the war, she said in *Harper's* that "mass nutrition education is the most important defense work for women, far more important than learning to how to drive ambulances that may never have to be driven."

British women set the example in both ambulance driving and mass feeding: when German bombs rained down on them in 1940, women set up mass-feeding stations to replace the thousands of kitchens that had been destroyed. This was the sort of "mass nutrition education" that Roosevelt had in mind, and some American women followed her advice. The Women's Defense School of Boston, for example, combined traditional domesticity with new militarism and created a course "in which," according to author Keith Ayling, "women are taught to cook 'the Army way.'"

Army cooks, however, did not have a reputation for creating food that was either particularly appetizing or nutritious—and it became the goal of the nation's relatively few certified dieticians to change that. At the same time, a chief goal of Oveta Culp Hobby, the director of the new Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC), was to bring an immediate halt to the intention of many military men who would have relegated WAACs to kitchens. Introduction of the professional dietician served nicely to achieve both purposes.

Thus, in early in 1943, the War Department began recruiting credentialed dieticians to join the army—without demanding that they do this via the WAAC. Instead, they served under the Surgeon General's Office, which also was the parent agency for the long-established Army Nurse Corps (ANC). Like ANC women, dieticians were commissioned as officers, and their medical expertise was recognized as so much more valuable than military knowledge that they were allowed to skip the rigors of basic training and go to straight to work.

Although they were in the army, their work habits would more nearly resemble those of women in the Navy Nurse Corps on board hospital ships: in both cases, a small number of qualified women functioned as decision-making executives, while a much larger number of men did the menial work. Dieticians planned menus for troops in general, as well as for specific soldiers according to their illnesses or wounds. Army cooks and bakers, most of them men, then followed out the dieticians' orders.

Because dieticians had no corps of their own, lines of authority between them and nurses could conflict. At one

American hospital in England, for example, a physician ordered eggnog for convalescing soldiers: patients thrilled at the prospect of something they had not tasted in years, however, had to wait until a decision was made on whether the responsibility for mixing the eggnog belonged to the nurses or the dietician.

Ultimately, more than sixteen hundred dieticians served in World War II. One was Margaret Anderson, who went from Texas to the Italian front of the European Theater of Operations early in 1944. It took more than a year of tough fighting for Americans to advance to northern Italy, where she was when she wrote this letter, which is included in a collection by authors Litoff and Smith:

I am very happy with the move. This is a good unit ...

The first day I made the menus, a number of people came to me and said ... I know you made it because it's so different. I really felt good. I can't see what the other dietician did. They said they never saw her except when she came to pick up the report ... I will make a lot of changes but I must do them gradually ... I am the only dietician and what I say goes. I have a good bunch of boys to work with.

Because the number of dieticians was minuscule in comparison with the millions of men, a soldier easily could go through the war without encountering any or even knowing of their existence. Their size invites comparison with the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP). Both groups numbered fewer than two thousand, and both held vague chains of command within the army's bureaucracy—but the new and controversial nature of the WASP meant they have been well publicized. Dieticians did what has always been deemed “women's work,” however, and their wartime contribution continues to be largely overlooked.

*See also:* **British women; conservation; food; European Theater of Operations; Hobby, Oveta Culp; home economics; hospitals; letters; Navy Nurse Corps; Quartermaster Corps; rationing; Roosevelt, Eleanor; Women's Airforce Service Pilots; Women's Army Auxiliary Corps**

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## DIVORCE RATES/LAWS

Divorce has become so common it is easy to forget that until fairly recently, even an amicable termination of marriage was considered scandalous. The concept of “no fault” divorce had yet to be introduced, and in most states, court cases were adversarial, bitterly fought, and expensive. In December 1946, more than a year after the war ended, *McCall's* warned its mostly female audience:

Nowhere in the United States has divorce by mutual consent been legalized ... In most states the ... proof required varies ... and if there is a contest you may find that the courts will deny you a divorce and sometimes will deny it even when there is no opposition ... Many states require you to wait varying degrees of time ... before remarriage ... In some states the courts have the power to prohibit the guilty person from marrying during the lifetime of the innocent spouse ...

All states required “proof” or “grounds”—a legal, demonstrable complaint that justified ending the marital contract. In New York, for example, the law provided only two permissible grounds for dissolving a marriage: adultery or long-term desertion. A judge could not grant a divorce until one of the partners proved in court that the other was guilty of one of those two offenses. In South Carolina, the legal code had no provision at all for ending a marriage: not until 1949, five years after the war, would voters finally force the legislature to enact a divorce mechanism. Until then, residents had to be wealthy enough to go to a state with more liberal laws, or—as many poor people did—simply ignore marital status in their relationships.

Because women usually had less money and were less able to file suit than men, this legal situation put a great deal of power into the hands of husbands. Indeed, ever since divorce reform was one of Elizabeth Cady Stanton's goals in the late nineteenth century, it had been clear that when states did allow divorce, wives were much more likely to file for it than husbands. The accepted double standard of behavior—as well as other complex and differing state laws on property, child custody, and more—meant that marriage vows were much more constraining on women than on men.

Even in the opposite case, when it was the man who wanted out of the marriage, state laws did not allow that less he, as the “guilty” party, could persuade his wife, as the “innocent” one, to file suit against him. Although it was little known at the time, the best example of such a scenario may be that of famed actors Spencer Tracy and Katharine Hepburn. They conducted a long affair while co-starring in many great films, but Tracy's wife was a devout Catholic who refused to use the evidence of his adultery that he would have happily provided. He and Hepburn never were able to marry because he had no grounds to divorce.

Liberalization of divorce laws began during the Great

Depression, when some state legislatures used this for economic advantage: they changed their legal codes to offer easier divorce and thereby attract new, affluent residents. Arizona, Arkansas, Idaho, Washington, and especially Nevada amended their laws to become “divorce-mill” states, taking advantage of the U.S. Constitution’s “full faith and credit” clause, which long had been interpreted to mean that states must recognize legal transactions in other states.

Nevada offered the easiest divorce, and especially couples who sought an amicable termination of marriage opted for it. The law required only six weeks of residence by one of the partners; usually it was the female of the couple who moved there, usually to the state capital of Reno. Despite the difficulties of travel during the war, hotels were filled with women who idled away the six weeks that it took to dissolve their marriage. After some initial interstate legal battles, Nevada’s judicial decrees established a record of standing up to contests in other states, and it developed a wide reputation as a divorce mecca.

Arkansas’ “divorce by publication” was much less known, but was the worst case of insider-knowledge judicial abuse. A *Collier’s* writer explained:

A little two-by-two inch notice [is published] in the Cherokee Gazette or whatever newspaper is in the area ... The first notice the wife receives will arrive when the War Department, Office of Dependency Benefits, in answer to her frantic inquiry, advises that, “Family allowance has been discontinued. Reason: soldier divorced.

In other words, the monthly financial allotment that the military sent to a soldier’s wife would be cut off, while she quite probably was unaware that she had been divorced—because, of course, she had not responded to the legal notice published in a faraway newspaper. Some states refused to recognize such a divorce, but there was virtually no free legal aid in that era, and anything a woman did to reestablish her rights—and those of her children—most likely would be at her expense. For the War Department, of course, such problems were a giant headache, a distraction from their chief goal of winning the war. And yet, the dependent wife and children of a drafted soldier had a legal and especially a moral claim to the money that was supposed to be allotted to them.

Congress intended the allotment system to compensate families whose income-producers were drafted, and it generally served that purpose well. Some sociologists, however, argued that these payments encouraged faux marriage and subsequent divorce, and, of course, there were occasional misuses. One expert, for example, said in *Current History* that “in the mountaineer districts of Appalachia ..., girls can easily live with their parents; meanwhile the family income will rise 300 percent on account of the marriage of one daughter.” The *Collier’s* writer cited above averred that he knew of a case in which a woman “married thirteen servicemen and filed for a family allowance from each—without benefit of a single divorce.”

The intention of such writers was to discourage divorce

by discouraging marriage during wartime, but initially, the rising divorce rate of the 1940s was not related to the war: instead, an improved economy allowed couples who had been unhappy during the depression decade of the 1930s to finally afford a divorce. As the war began to dominate the decade, divorce figures actually dropped briefly because Congress protected soldiers from civil suits, including divorce. Still, it was irrefutable that years of separation and loneliness were hard on marriages, especially the hasty ones that war always has encouraged.

Knowing that his life might soon be over tremendously increased the male desire to wed and perhaps father a child. This time pressure, this compaction of the usual life cycle, caused countless men to propose marriage to women they barely knew. Grace Porter Miller, who served with the Women’s Army Corps (WAC), was not especially unusual in saying that “I received several dozen proposals ... Some were frivolous, spur-of-the-moment ideas. Some were very serious.”

Most of the stridently anti-marriage advice was written by men, and they rarely acknowledged how much pressure some soldiers put on a young woman to wed. If she succumbed to his pleas, it was extremely likely that society would blame her when the “marriage” failed. More immediately, if she agreed even to an engagement, then she was expected to give up her social life and be faithful to this relative stranger for unknown years into the future.

The opposite was much less true. The military itself seemed to assume men would be unfaithful, and the many posters in its facilities that warned against venereal disease emphasized caution, not fidelity. According to sociologist Ernest Burgess, army policy was “compulsory use of prophylaxis,” presumably with someone other than the woman at home who was expected to be faithful to the condom user. Writer Samuel Tenenbaum also was typical in accepting without question soldiers’ assertions that their wives had been unfaithful, while not bothering to inquire about male behavior. Whether or not it was true, he believed female infidelity back at home was rampant:

In one army division stationed in Europe, an average of five soldiers daily receive word that their wives want to break marital ties ... and another division has a “broken hearts club” for men whose wives have jilted them ...

An Army chaplain, shocked by stories of broken marriages, was moved to report .., “The men come to tell me they are going to divorce their wives ... After a man has flown seventy to ninety missions ... and then finds his home has been wrecked by infidelity, there is little I can tell him.

The war, in fact, was over when Tenenbaum wrote his article, and he added approvingly: “Incensed by the increasing numbers of infidelity cases brought by returning servicemen, a state’s attorney in Illinois has announced that he will vigorously prosecute wives and husbands charged with adultery.” The addition of “and husbands,” however, likely would be more apparent than real: a wife rarely could prove that her returning man had committed adultery overseas; the prosecution threat instead was aimed at women.



Combat, understandably, made men paranoid, and when mail did not arrive, soldiers easily could become convinced of relationship problems that did not truly exist. What that meant for a wife, especially a new one, was that she had to be extremely cautious to avoid becoming the victim of gossip. There was little choice except to cloister herself for months and years in a way that was not natural for young women, or risk the possibility that someone would portray her as running around on him. The news media added to the problem by exaggerating the potential for divorce and overstating the link between it and the war.

Thoughtful analysis, however, revealed that by far the majority of divorces did not involve soldiers, but instead were between civilians. A *Newsweek* article written more than a year after the war ended, for example, began with: "in 1945 there were 31 divorces for every 100 marriages ... double prewar totals." The writer did not explain, however, that 1945 could be expected to be the most atypical of years because it was the first in which soldiers returned to the United States and could file for divorce.

Moreover, two other important—and positive—statistics, which showed things were not as bad as they seemed, were buried near the article's end. "Only 8 per cent of couples with children broke up their homes," the story continued, and "the majority of divorces were not G.I. ... 82 per cent represented pre-Pearl Harbor marriages." Pre-Pearl Harbor marriages were much more likely to have been based on female economic dependence, and this change—not hasty war marriages—may well be the key to the rising divorce rate. The war offered millions of women the first well-paid jobs they ever had, which gave them enough economic freedom that they no longer had to stay in bad marriages.

Reacting to the same 1945 data on rising divorce, *U.S. News* reported another factor, but did not explore the meaning behind its statement that "women college graduates were four times as likely to make unsuccessful marriages as men graduates." A more positive interpretation is that women who were best educated and most financially independent were also those least dependent on the married state. They did not have to stay with a man merely for his money.

World War I sociologists also warned of divorces that would follow wartime marriages, and that also became statistically true—but so was the century-long pattern of increased divorce. War did not begin the trend, but did strengthen it. In addition to new economic independence for women, war also dimmed defining lines of behavior, as "nice girls" did things that previously would have brought instant loss of respectability. When World War II men danced with women at the USO without intention of future commitment or when they worked next to them in factories or lived near them in overseas bases, they began to see women as real people who could not be simplistically classified as "naughty" or "nice," but who were as individually different and complex as men.

Just as people differed, so did their marriages, and courts that forced them to prove each other "guilty" or "innocent" because they wanted to terminate this particular contract

seemed increasingly stupid. As the generation of veterans assumed leadership, divorce laws changed so quickly that today it is taken for granted that adults have a right to end unhappy relationships. Men and women who fought fascism would not willingly return to a society that refused them permission to make such fundamental decisions as whether or not to be married. If freedom meant anything, it surely meant that personal choices were personal.

*See also:* **allotments; courtship; draft; European Theater of Operations; marriage; Pacific Theater of Operations; Pearl Harbor; posters; travel; venereal disease; Women's Army Corps; weddings; wives of servicemen**

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### DOGS FOR DEFENSE

Dogs have accompanied men to war since animals were domesticated, but as with horses and the cavalry, there was less place for them in twentieth-century combat. During the 1930s, however, especially Germany increased the numbers of German shepherds trained as police dogs: these highly intelligent animals were taught to help their human masters locate people who were attempting to escape from Nazi terrorism.

The United States did not have such a program, and the one that was created soon after the beginning of World War II was much more defensive than offensive in nature. It was the brainchild of a wealthy dog breeder and trainer, New Jersey's Alene Erlanger—or, as she was invariably referred to in the era's press, Mrs. Milton Erlanger. Married to a prominent

New York City businessman and the mother of three adult children, she also was a top official in the American Kennel Association. Just a month after Pearl Harbor, in January of 1942, she began Dogs for Defense, Inc. Although she specialized in poodles, Erlanger was quick to see the value of other breeds for both military and civilian defense work; ultimately, no dogs under forty pounds were accepted.

Military and civil defense authorities, of course, had many other priorities in 1942, and most of a year passed before Dogs for Defense began to gel. During this time, Erlanger's completed "War Dogs," the training manual that the military adopted to teach dogs and their handlers how to work together. By the year's end, the *New York Times* headlined its story, "Thousand of Dogs Under Training to Do Patrol Work With the Army:"

Some of the dogs are guarding plants and quartermaster depots. Others are walking sentry duty with humans on beaches and at other unannounced locations ... Programs ... prepare dogs to act as messenger carriers, as scouts to find the hidden wounded on remote battlefields, and as carriers ... of loads.

Other women assisted Erlanger in securing donations of suitable dogs, and ultimately, more than twenty thousand families in all of the then-forty-eight states gave up dogs for the duration. In addition to German Shepherds, the preferred breeds were Doberman Pinchers and Alaskan huskies. Working with them involved a degree of danger, and, despite Erlanger's expert manual, most trainers were bitten at some point.

The Army, Coast Guard, and Marines all developed dog-training programs, which ranged across the nation from Front Royal, Virginia, to Fort Robinson, Nebraska, and on to Camp Hale, Colorado, and Camp Pendleton, California. At the last camp, near San Diego, the first dogs to arrive were greeted by Navajo women who brought gifts for both the animals and their trainers. Dogs also prepared for tropical warfare at Gulfport, Mississippi, and for cold-weather combat at Camp Rimini, Montana. Ultimately, almost two thousand trained dogs went overseas.

In the army, they were under the aegis of the Quartermasters Corps, where numerous members of the Women's Army Corps were assigned and which supplied the needs of both dogs and their handlers. The Marines used dogs primarily in the Pacific Theater of Operations, where they proved unnerving to Japanese soldiers unaccustomed to them: no Marine unit protected by a sentry dog suffered a surprise attack. Other dogs worked in the European Theater of Operations, as well as on the North African front. They also guarded prisoner-of-war camps within the United States.

Sentry use was the best canine achievement, as they proved excellent at guarding secret areas and ensuring that none but authorized personnel entered. The second major use that Erlanger and other leaders expected was in detecting hidden explosives, but perhaps because the dogs had insufficient training for the first experiment on the North African front, the military de-emphasized that use. Similar initial plans for Saint Bernard-like

dogs who could carry first-aid supplies also proved unnecessary, and because of the expense of feeding large breeds, Dogs for Defense stopped accepting Great Danes.

When the war ended, the New York Women's League for Animals took the lead in returning dogs to civilian life. They developed a training program that "demilitarized" behavior and found homes for dogs whose donors could not take them back. The postwar military bought dogs it used for new "K-9" programs instead of accepting donations: Americans had proven so eager to support this war effort that about half of donated pets could not manage the rigorous basic training developed by Dogs for Defense. Erlanger is credited with developing the K-9 concepts used by American law enforcement, and on March 16, 1945, the War Department conferred upon her its highest applicable honor, the Exceptional Civilian Service Award. The Dogs for Defense Foundation still is extant in the historic town of Harper's Ferry, West Virginia.

*See also:* **Civil Defense; European Theater of Operations; North Africa; Pacific Theater of Operations; Pearl Harbor; Quartermasters Corps; Women's Army Corps**

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## DOMESTIC WORKERS

Until World War II, middle-class respectability meant employing at least a cook or maid. In the urban North, domestic workers long had been immigrants or second-generation immigrants, especially Irish women; in the South, they typically were African American. Midwestern homes employed a "hired girl," a young woman of similar social background who had not yet married, while in the West, domestic workers often were males of Asian descent called "houseboys." The introduction of electrical appliances in the 1920s reduced the amount of domestic work that needed to be done, but because working-class people were desperate for jobs during the Great Depression of the 1930s, the tradition lingered. Having servants remained essential to the image of affluence, as no aspiring business or professional man would want his wife to be seen doing her own housework.

Such status symbolism, as well as profound racism, was woven into this particular occupation. Mary Anderson, a Swedish immigrant who rose to be the long-time head of the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor, well understood this. In a memoir written less than a decade after the war ended, she mused:

I had been a domestic worker myself and I was not a success at it, yet it did give me a living ... I have always felt that we should give more attention to this in the Women's Bureau and that we should collect the facts about this kind of employment, but we never did because we were always prevented ... It was a "hot potato."

One day, when I sat next to Mrs. [Eleanor] Roosevelt at lunch, she said, "Mary, you will have to do something about domestic service." Eventually we got the Bureau of the Budget to approve a special appropriation of twenty-five thousand dollars for a study ... But when it came up to the Appropriations Committee, the members who were from the South just would not hear of it ... The whole subject got mixed up with the race question, because in Washington and the South most of the domestic workers are Negroes. The southerners did not want to appropriate money for an investigation that might improve conditions of domestic employment.

As Anderson indicated, records on domestic workers were not reliable—especially in this era before they were eligible for Social Security—but the war changed those numbers more than Anderson's best intentions could have. The lowest conservative estimate is that at least a half-million women left the occupation forever because of World War II. Author Penny Colman says that "the number of black women who were poorly paid domestic workers declined from 72 percent to 40 percent. The number of black women who were better-paid factory workers increased from 7.3 percent to 18.6 percent." Older women were more likely to stay in domestic work, especially if they had been employed by the same family for decades, but young women and especially African-American women found that labor shortages in defense industries offered them much better employment alternatives.

They traded their aprons for both overalls in defense plants and for military uniforms, as the 1942 Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC) gave black women their first opportunity to enlist. The WAAC and other women's military services required their members to be high school graduates, however, something that often was not the case with domestic workers. Many of those women obtained jobs in defense factories, where numerous blue-collar men also lacked diplomas.

Federal contracts required that employers at least attempt to take advantage of all available local labor, and although much more could have been done to prevent both race and gender discrimination in hiring, many women nonetheless got their first non-housework jobs because of the war. Thousands of domestic workers, again especially black women, left that occupation for jobs in the munitions industry alone.

In coastal cities such as Charleston, South Carolina, and along the Gulf Coast of Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana, former cooks and maids worked at shipyards, helping to build the thousands of ships the nation needed. Emboldened by such experiences, many moved North during and after the war rather than return to menial jobs. The 1950 census, the first one after the war, demonstrated this in Mississippi: for the

first time in more than a century, the state had fewer blacks than whites. The vast majority of these departing women either had held no paid employment in Mississippi or had been poorly-paid domestic workers.

Even women who stayed with domestic service had a chance to move up because of the war. As men were drafted or joined the military, the domestic staffs of extremely wealthy families changed, and traditional male jobs were taken over by women. Instead of a butler as supervisor, for example, a woman would be dubbed "housekeeper" and put in charge of an estate home. Exclusive clubs and hotels also replaced waiters with waitresses, and some women moved from the kitchen to the dining room. Trains, however, never made this transition: porters, conductors, and other service personnel on trains continued to be black men, probably because they—unlike other service workers—were unionized.

The stereotype of the wealthy woman who spent the war lamenting "the servant problem" indeed had a basis in reality, and fear that this luxury would disappear forever intensified the anti-Roosevelt views that such people often held. Most people, though, laughed along with Helen Hokinson, a *New Yorker* cartoonist, who famously targeted society matrons who could not manage their daily lives without massive help. The change in domestic service affected women much more than men, but most women understood that it was another wartime adjustment that they had no choice but to accept. Some even patriotically encouraged their household help to both better themselves and contribute to victory. One example is Congresswoman Helen Gahagan Douglas, who gave up her servants in 1942, when her movie-star husband, Melvyn Douglas, gave up his career to join the army at its lowest rank.

The daughters of this 1940s generation would be the feminists of the 1970s, and they would force inclusion of domestic workers in Social Security. The occupation, however, never would be professionalized in the way that Mary Anderson and other progressives had hoped. Instead, its numbers diminished as housework itself diminished: the postwar world eliminated tasks such as emptying icebox drip-pans and cleaning the ashes from stoves. As clothes dryers, dishwashers, microwaves, and more became common, there simply was less work to do. The introduction of many external services, especially fast food, also eliminated the time that had to be spent in the care and feeding of a family.

Other lifestyle and attitudinal changes during World War II also were factors in the decline of domestic service. Many people, both men and women, valued their privacy after years of living in overcrowded barracks or other housing and did not want servants in postwar homes. After the initial postwar baby boom, smaller families because of birth control also decreased the need for household help. Even traditionally male domestic service jobs disappeared, as the more equalitarian postwar man was not embarrassed to mow his own lawn or shovel his snow.

More important, especially in the military, many women worked with other women whom they would have considered



social inferiors in prewar days, and they discovered that there was no rationale for the prejudices associated with servants. WAAC Jane Pollock, for example, never thought of African Americans in the same way after she had to go to the daughter of her family's maid—also a WAAC—for help with a math class. For all these reasons and more, the war changed American society so that women had options beyond domestic work.

*See also:* **African-American women; Anderson, Mary; birth control/birth rate; defense industries; Douglas, Helen Gahagan; housing; munitions industry; Roosevelt, Eleanor; shipyards; Women's Army Auxiliary Corps**

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### DOUGLAS, EMILY TAFT (1899–1994)

Elected to Congress from Chicago in 1944, the year of the D-Day invasion, Emily Taft Douglas had recognized the dangers of fascism much earlier, when she traveled in Europe in the 1930s. A theater major, she had starred on Broadway prior to marrying University of Chicago professor Paul Douglas. They were so dedicated to defeating the Nazis that he enlisted in the Marine Corps at age fifty.

She ran for Congress while he was overseas, and despite strong opposition from the *Chicago Tribune*, defeated one of the House's most isolationist members, Republican Stephen Day. Her congressional colleagues respected this newcomer, and Douglas was assigned to the prestigious House Foreign Affairs Committee. She was recognized as an expert not only because of her travel, but she also had held internationalist positions with the League of Women Voters and the International Relations Center in Chicago. She visited postwar Europe in August 1945 and proposed

legislation to mandate arms control under the aegis of the new United Nations.

But the war was over by 1946, when she had to run for re-election, and voters who were tired of required internationalist sacrifices ousted her. When she returned to Washington in 1948, it was as Senator Paul Douglas' wife—a role that many found appropriate for women in the postwar era. She nonetheless continued to volunteer during her husband's illustrious Senate career, and she also wrote inspirational books on other women, including birth control pioneer Margaret Sanger. Emily Taft Douglas died in her ninety-fifth year.

*See also:* **birth control/birth rate; D-Day; League of Women Voters; occupied Germany; postwar; United Nations**

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### DOUGLAS, HELEN GAHAGAN (1900–1980)

Helen Gahagan Douglas was elected to Congress in the last full year of World War II. A graduate of New York City's Bernard College, she had established a reputation on the stage prior to marrying movie star Melvyn Douglas. Marriage meant leaving Broadway for Hollywood in the 1930s, and after discovering that she did not enjoy the film style of acting, she changed careers. The motivation to turn to political action was dramatic: she was in Vienna in 1937 and had signed a contract to sing with the Vienna State Opera, when a Nazi man inquired if she was pure Aryan. She tore up the contract, returned to California, and became active in Democratic politics.

Douglas supported the economic reforms made by the New Deal that coped with the Great Depression, and in 1939, President Franklin Roosevelt appointed her to the advisory committee of the Works Progress Administration (WPA). She also was a delegate to the 1940 national Democratic convention and served as vice-chairman for the California party. Melvyn Douglas' shared his wife's political views and her abhorrence of fascism, and shortly after Pearl Harbor, he enlisted in the army as a private. The drop in their income made it necessary for Helen Douglas to do without servants for the first time in her life.

Thus, according to Eleanor Roosevelt, she "literally ran her campaign on pennies," but nonetheless won her 1944 race for Congress. Both her lack of personal income and wartime rationing meant that new clothing was difficult



Congresswoman Helen Gahagan Douglas, who represented the Los Angeles area, speaking at a World Youth Unity rally in New York City in March 1945. *Courtesy of Library of Congress.*

to obtain, but her devoted campaign volunteers surprised Douglas by remaking items in her old theater trunk into a suitable Washington, D.C., wardrobe. “As a new member of Congress,” Roosevelt continued:

Helen Gahagan Douglas was something of a disappointment to the press ... Sober and industrious, she seemed determined to live down her Broadway and Hollywood background. She and her Republican colleague, Clare Booth Luce, shook hands in public and spoiled a build-up that would have pictured them as two competing glamor gals ready to tear each other to pieces. Helen Douglas became a hard-working conscientious member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Douglas held the Los Angeles-based seat for three terms, during which Roosevelt died and the war ended. She supported President Harry Truman’s Fair Deal, which included veterans benefits, and he rewarded her with appointment as a delegate to the new United Nations in 1946. Other members of Congress, including Republican Frances Bolton, also held U.N. positions simultaneous with their congressional positions in the formative years of the global organization—but it was these ideals of international peace and economic security which, in their 1950 campaign against each other, Richard Nixon successfully labeled “communistic.”

She was the Democratic nominee and he was the Republican nominee for a vacant California U.S. Senate seat. No rules of chivalry benefited Douglas in this postwar era when women were supposed to return to babies and kitchens, and he soundly defeated her. Nixon’s campaign, in fact, was such a classic of viciousness that women all over the country who otherwise might have emulated Douglas were intimidated: almost four decades passed before another Democratic woman would successfully run for the U.S. Senate.

Douglas served in appointive positions in the 1960s, when President Lyndon Johnson’s War on Poverty renewed the goals of Truman’s Fair Deal. She wrote *The Eleanor Roosevelt We Remember* (1963), and her own memoirs, *A Full Life* (1982), were published posthumously.

*See also:* **Bolton, Frances; domestic workers; Luce, Clare Booth; Pearl Harbor; rationing; Roosevelt, Eleanor; United Nations**

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#### DRAFT

The American Revolution, of course, was fought by rebels against the established government, and George Washington had no power to draft soldiers for his army. The War of 1812 and the Mexican War of the 1840s also were fought by volunteers, and so America did not conscript soldiers until the Civil War, when governments on both sides imposed highly unfair systems. A more equitable draft was used during the United States’ brief participation in World War I, but in both it and the Civil War, the conscription followed official declarations of war. Adopting a draft prior to declaring war therefore represented a major national change, but in 1940, when the country still was officially neutral in the ongoing wars in Asia and Europe, Congress adopted the nation’s first peacetime draft.

Because German bombs were raining regularly on Britain in September of 1940, Congress opted for preparedness and passed the Selective Service and Training Act. It called for registration of men between ages twenty-one and thirty-five, with a limit of nine hundred thousand draftees during the first year. Registration was completed within six weeks, and on October 29, numbers were randomly drawn for the nation’s

first peacetime compulsory military service. The next year, a few days after Pearl Harbor and U.S. entrance into the war, Congress amended the act to include men from ages twenty to forty-four, and still later, it called for registration of all males between eighteen and sixty-five years old. As routine registration became routine draft, *American Home* began a 1944 story with an allusion to the blue star that homes of servicemen often displayed: “before the year is over, there will be a half million more of us hanging out the blue stars, for no woman with a husband under thirty-eight is sure of keeping him with her much longer.”

Almost as important as the federal draft law, however, was the fact that it was implemented by local boards. This ideally brought government closer to the people but, in fact, it often encouraged too much personal variance from the intent of the Selective Service system. Congress spelled out a range of exemptions which, abstractly, were fair and reasonable, but local favoritism often meant that the unmarried son of the town’s bank president would be exempt, while an impoverished father of three had to go to war.

Women were directly affected by whether their husbands and sons had to leave home, but only rarely were they appointed to draft boards. Women had only become voters in most states a mere two decades earlier, and few had gained the political skills and attitudinal change necessary to take on such an important male preserve as draft boards, with the life-or-death exemptions they could give or withhold. The large organizations for the vote disbanded after their 1920 victory, and neither the League of Women Voters nor any other group of the 1940s was sufficiently feminist to protest the lack of female inclusion on these vital bodies.

The Selective Service Act, of course, allowed exemptions for men with proven health problems, but some boards stretched that to provide favoritism to men whose medical conditions were only minor. “Flat feet” especially became a cynical joke because so many exemptions were issued to men who claimed they were unable to march. When they obtained exemptions and yet enjoyed healthy, active civilian lives, many women whose husbands and sweethearts sought no such excuses felt resentful toward draft boards that allowed themselves to be thus manipulated.

Much more reasonable exemptions were issued for men who were “essential civilians,” or in other words, were employed in jobs that were essential to civil defense. This could include men who, for instance, held skilled jobs in steel mills or similar industries that were vital to defense production, as well as law enforcement officers and others whose expertise was essential to protecting civilians. As exemptions for married men and then for fathers disappeared, many women urged their husbands to find draft-exempt employment, even if it meant moving across the country to a Los Angeles aircraft factory or a Baltimore shipyard. Some families separated for the duration, with the man going to Detroit or St. Louis to make tanks or trucks, while the women and children stayed home and avoided the costs of living in wartime boom towns.

“Essential civilian,” of course, meant that a man’s draft status was completely his own and not dependent on his marital state. In most cases, however, draft boards took marital status as a serious factor, and especially early in the war, were reluctant to call married men and certainly fathers. Countless couples therefore moved up wedding plans and tried to have a child so that there would be less likelihood of the man being drafted. For a woman in this situation, however, the profound question would be whether this was true love or whether the man simply wanted to be married as a draft evasion. Magazines were full of advice on how to tell the difference and how to handle courtship and marriage in wartime.

A man’s college-student status was much less a factor in World War II than it would be in later wars. Boards could issue exemptions for that, too, but relatively few men sought them; instead, peer pressure played a strong role in the era’s steep decline of male college students. Geography and ethnicity were much more important factors in whether or not one would be drafted. Boards rarely had representation from African American or other minority communities, and these men were drafted disproportionately—as were poor whites, especially in the South. It was not uncommon, for example, that an unmarried urban man in a non-essential industry such as advertising somehow obtained an exemption, while both white and black fathers—with families in much greater need of their presence—nonetheless were drafted.

Many men enlisted before their “number came up,” hoping that volunteering would give them a chance to be an officer or at least some choice of geographical station and/or MOS. By November of 1942, however, Congress passed legislation proposed by the War Department that made the process of “Selective Service” more selective and less random. Both the Army and the Navy had the power to draft; the Air Force did not yet exist except as a branch of the Army. The draft age was lowered to eighteen, with seventeen-year-olds accepted with parental permission. On the other end of the scale, both the Army and the Navy drafted fathers, even fathers of more than two children.

Nor was there any expiration date on service, as both draftees and volunteers were in “for the duration” or until the war was won. Soldiers and sailors whose wounds or illnesses were capable of healing convalesced in coastal hospitals, and then were returned to combat as soon as possible. Because they were away from their families for years, Congress sought to alleviate the financial impact of drafting fathers by providing a monthly pay allotment. The amount was based on both the soldier’s rank and the number of children in the family—but no allotment could handle the emotional impact of rearing children who knew Daddy only as a photograph. No amount of money could compensate a bride who saw her youth slipping away as she was forced to procrastinate on planning her future, not knowing when or if her husband would return.

Variations of other meanings of “draft” also were debated during World War II. The Constitution gives Congress the power to “raise and support armies;” it does not restrict the draft to males, and wartime members of Congress clearly



understood that. Although they never seriously discussed a draft for the women's military services that they created—the Women's Army Corps, the Navy's WAVES, the Coast Guard's SPARS, and Women Marines—they did consider drafting women in other ways.

Eight bills were introduced into Congress in 1942 that would have conscripted women for industrial and/or agricultural labor, which was already the case for British women. All were sponsored by Republicans or conservative Southern Democrats, but the most serious attention went to the one written by Vermont Senator Warren Austen. Ultimately called the Austin-Wadsworth Bill, it would have required both men and women to work at whatever civilian job they were assigned, with only pregnant women and those with children under eighteen exempted.

That Congress did not pass this bill or similar ones primarily was due to the fact that the White House opposed the idea as impractical, not because either branch of government believed that it was unconstitutional. Three years later, Congress again assumed that it had the right to draft women when it very nearly adopted the Nurses Selective Service Bill of 1945. That was proposed by President Franklin Roosevelt in his January State of the Union speech, and it was well on its way to final adoption when victory in Europe became apparent in April.

But all three of these possibilities—drafting women for military service, for industrial/agricultural labor, and for nursing—did not add up to nearly the attention that understandably went to the ongoing draft of men. It was in their roles as wives and mothers that women were most affected by the draft, yet almost no women protested the fact that their point of view was rarely represented on draft boards.

Finally, at least one woman who wanted to join the military misled her parents into believing that women, like men, were subject to the draft. A Boston veteran recently told General Wilma Vaught, head of the Women In Service to America Memorial, that her parents were among the many Massachusetts immigrants whose abilities in English were limited. Knowing that they would object to her enlistment, she simply told them that she had been drafted when she joined Women's Army Corps. Because her parents accepted this without question, it seems entirely possible that other immigrant families also believed women were being drafted. They seemed to assume that this departure from gender stereotype was just another part of being part of America, the land of equality.

**See also:** allotments; Austin-Wadsworth Bill; aircraft workers; Blue Star Mothers; British women; boom towns; colleges; courtship; defense industries; League of Women Voters; magazines; marriage; Marines, Women; Nurses Selective Service Bill of 1945; Pearl Harbor; shipyards; SPARS; WAVES; Women's Army Corps

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## DRAMA

The war called forth the best in Americans to such a degree that, despite its exigencies, the arts, including drama, benefited from the era's enhanced opportunity. Increased patronage alone was a beneficial factor for the stage: Americans traveled much more because of the war, and most of the millions who went to the European Theater of Operations departed from New York. Many took advantage of what might well have been their first trip there to see a Broadway play. The government also encouraged morale-boosters of all sorts, and a number of mechanisms developed that offered would-be actors their first opportunity to perform. Even in the isolated battle fronts of the South Pacific, stages were built for traveling USO troupes.

The trend-setters in New York dubbed Carson McCullers of Columbus, Georgia, as "the young writer of the decade" already in 1941, when she won the Drama Critics Circle annual award for *Reflections in a Golden Eye*. That followed up her previous year's success, *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter*. Both she and her lesser-known sister, Margaret (Rita) G. Smith, also won O. Henry Short Story Prizes during the war years. Despite complex health and personal problems, McCullers added *Member of the Wedding* in 1946, the first full postwar year. All of these works have been repeatedly performed on both stage and screen.

In 1942, the first full year of war, Katharine Hepburn and her longtime co-star and lover, Spencer Tracy, had a major movie hit with *Woman of the Year*. Hepburn performed other memorable roles featuring smart, witty women, and that sort of woman set the tone for the war years. The "Gentlemen Prefer Blondes" and "Perils of Pauline" images of dependent women in the 1920s largely disappeared with the new generation of the 1940s. The wartime theater-goer was more serious and sophisticated, and audiences opted for female protagonists who were real people, not caricatures.

Hepburn shared the acme of stage and screen with Bette Davis. Both were supremely talented but not especially attractive women, and the acclaim they won from both the public and the critics demonstrated that the era sought more than shallow beauty in its female stars. Davis especially shined in the 1941 film version of a culturally important work by Lillian Hellman, *The Little Foxes* (1939), Talulah Bankhead originated the role on Broadway.

Hellman continued to write powerful plays during the war, especially *Watch on the Rhine* (1941). A strong indictment against fascism, it was based on her experience in Europe in the late 1930s. She then settled on Martha's Vineyard with Dashiell Hammett, who adapted the play for film. It came out in 1943, midway through the war, and both raised morale and won awards. Much later, Hellman used the theme of resistance to Nazis with the memorable *Julia* (1977).

*The Friendly Persuasion* was a popular 1945 novel by Jessamyn West that was adapted to performance. Set in the Civil War among Quakers torn between traditional pacifism and the fight to end slavery, it invited comparison to the current war and similar difficult life-choice situations for young people in love. West's novel sold well, but the 1945 best seller was *Forever Amber* by Kathleen Winsor, which was set in seventeenth-century England. Its candid sexuality caused it to be banned in Boston—but two years later, people stood in line to see the film version.

Drama's most important milestone for women in 1945, however, was that Mary Chase won its Pulitzer Prize. She earned it for a delightful play about *Harvey*, a tall, invisible rabbit who accompanies the good-natured male protagonist to New York bars. *Harvey* was a happy change for audiences too long tense from the war, and it was hugely popular on both stage and screen.

Still, it must be pointed out that Chase won for a comedy, and that Hellman and McCullers, who took on serious topics, never received the Pulitzer Prize in Drama that was arguably due them. Moreover, no woman had won this prize for a decade, and a similar amount of time would pass before another woman won. The 1956 prize would go to a contrastingly somber war-based play, *The Diary of Anne Frank*, by Frances Goodrich and her husband, Albert Hackett.

The war era's best-known female playwright may have been none of the above, but instead was known for works before and after the war: during it, Clare Booth Luce was a congresswoman from Connecticut. Her last Broadway hit before going into politics was *Kiss the Boys Goodbye* in 1938; decades later, with the feminism of the 1970s, her 1936 play, *The Women*, would be revived.

The dramatic work of all these women and more has held up extremely well; many rerun frequently on television. The 1950s, in contrast, with its McCarthy-era persecution of intellectuals and its decline in the status of women, produced much less of lasting value. Hellman found it difficult to earn a living in the 1950s, while Davis sued studios to get scripts with female characters worthy of her talents. As the century continued, it became increasingly clear that the war years not

only had been exceptional in offering women jobs in non-traditional fields, but also had been an exceptionally golden era for women in the theater.

*See also:* **artists; best sellers; European Theater of Operations; Luce, Clare Booth; movies; music; travel; USO**

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## DRESS, CHANGES IN

The pre-Pearl Harbor woman almost always wore a dress. If she was pictured in her home for advertisements, the dress probably was covered with a frilly apron, and even if she was ostensibly in the midst of housework, she often wore heels. The popular "Dick and Jane" books that were used in the era's elementary schools invariably portrayed the mother of the family wearing high heels, even though homemaking was her only job. Although heels did not mesh with the reality of most children's lives, the other details did, and even women who got down on their knees to scrub floors did that while wearing a dress.

Teenage girls might occasionally wear slacks or shorts for recreational activities, but adult women did not. Nor did girls wear pants to school: even in cold climates such as Minnesota, little girls donned garter belts that attached to their long cotton or woolen hosiery, or they shivered bare-legged. The only acceptable use of pants was snow pants, a woolen garment worn under dresses and taken off as soon as the child got to school. Teenage schoolgirls usually went bare-legged, except for the bobby socks that were popular with their saddle-shoes; few school administrators allowed girls in pants until the feminist revolution of the late 1960s.

Covering female legs thus was the biggest change that defense industry work created in the 1940s. Ironically, it had been just two decades since skirts shortened enough to reveal legs, a dramatic change of the Roaring Twenties that was a first in centuries of western history. Yet most people forget quickly, and just as they had demanded that legs be covered in the 1920s, conservatives in the 1940s demanded that legs be revealed, convinced that covering them with pants was a moral wrong. The cliché became that the man "wears the pants in the family," both literally and figuratively.



Even in the cold of the U.S. Naval Training Station at Great Lakes, Illinois, seabag-carrying WAVES wear skirts, not pants. Their non-standard footwear probably indicates that all parts of their uniforms had not yet arrived. Other women, working in shoe and garment factories, struggled with the demand for millions of new items of dress. *U.S. Navy Photograph, Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

Again ironically, the 1940s change largely was because of men, the men who dominated the era's personnel offices. They dealt with blue-collar men who wore pants, and the nature of factory work made this imperative for female workers, too. The objective was to ensure safety, but for women who had never before appeared in public wearing anything other than skirts, the adjustment to dressing like a man was a profound change. A great deal of media attention went to this revolution, and although most of it was written in the determinedly shallow style so popular with the era's editors, the public nonetheless seemed to grasp that this transformation in dress represented a serious and permanent change in women's roles. Wearing male clothing was indeed a genuine liberation for women—brought about by a need to conform.

Conformity is best ensured with a uniform, and Consolidated Aircraft used enlightened management procedure when it allowed the first two hundred women hired to vote on the issue. They responded heavily in favor of uniforms, not only because uniforms of all sorts were fashionable during the war, but also because they were highly practical. Busy women preferred not to have to shop for suitable clothes, especially with the difficulties of wartime shortages and rationing, and wearing uniforms eliminated daily dressing decisions. For the company, uniformed employees were preferable in many ways: one defense plant, for example, even cleverly designed lattice-work pockets that would reveal tools that might indicate potential sabotage or theft, as well as the cigarettes that were absolutely forbidden in munitions work.

Not surprisingly, this transformation meant initial problems even with the most enlightened companies. Elinore Herrick was one of the highest-placed women in defense management, in charge of personnel for the nationwide firm of Todd Shipyards, and yet she had difficulties, especially with finding suitable shoes for her new female employees.

Women refused to wear the ones initially issued to them—and for sound reasons, not because of style. Herrick explained that they said:

"The soles aren't heavy enough, oxford-cut shoes aren't safe enough; we want them over the ankles, too. And we want steel toes like the men ..."

We started searching the city for men's heavy, bulky safety shoes in the smallest sizes ... The women were right, only it never occurred to us who were planning that they would be willing to wear those unshapely, bulky, men's shoes. The thing we learned was that women really cared about doing the job safely.

Most defense plants did not trouble themselves with providing uniforms, but simply insisted on dress codes in which slacks and sturdy shoes were mandatory. Unable to find such things manufactured expressly for women, they bought men's clothing—and accidents were inevitable. A female welder, for example, told *Harper's* that she constantly had to reach down to pull up her too-big leather leg-covers, and once "dropped her iron in an effort to grab up her pants and received a nasty burn." In the same article, written midway through the war, a garment-industry expert said: "I do not know of a single manufacturer of women's gloves who has gone into the manufacture of women's work gloves. Yet at many plants steel-reinforced gloves are essential."

Particular industries indeed had particular dress requirements. Women working near airplane instruments, for example, could not wear sweaters or anything likely to shed because, according to author Nell Giles, "even the tiniest piece of lint can destroy the accuracy of an instrument ... of a bomber." Jewelry often was forbidden, even wedding rings that could cause a machine to grab a finger. *Harper's* reported that when "it became apparent that devout Catholic





A woman with the Office of Price Administration goes over wartime purchasing rules at a men's clothing store. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

girls would not easily be parted from wedding rings," management at one defense plant sought out local priests, "who promised ... that when the war was over, they would again bless the rings."

The munitions industry was the most precise about what employees could wear. At a shell-loading plant, for example, women went through an inspection room every morning, where they were checked for contraband such as silk undergarments, which could attract static electricity and cause an explosion. In addition to the obvious cigarettes and matches, forbidden items included pins, watches, and other metal that might spark. Once past the inspection area, each woman went to her locker and donned rubber-soled shoes and a freshly-laundered uniform that included a fire-resistant cap. One of these "gunpowder girls" told writer Dorothy Warner about a male colleague "who refused to wear a cap. Leaving the plant, he stopped to light a cigarette. His hair went up in flames."

Gunpowder in hair represented the extremes of danger, but virtually all defense plants had general regulations on some aspects of feminine appearance, with hair length being the most notable. Again, in the flapper era just two decades earlier, it had been extremely controversial for a woman to cut her hair, but now women found that short hair was almost mandatory. Long tresses that could get caught in machinery were a definite factory taboo, and if woman opted not to cut

her hair, she had to keep it above her neckline. Although the objective was to make her hair as unimportant to machinery as a man's was, factory women typically differentiated themselves: the style was to tie a scarf into a turban; very few women opted for masculine caps.

On the street, outside of industrial life, white-collar men wore hats, while blue-collar men wore caps. Most women considered a hat mandatory, although some, especially older and lower-class women, wore scarves or shawls. Few adults went bare-headed outdoors, even in summer and despite the need to conserve fabric and other materials. That conservation was necessary partly because wool, silk, and other fabrics could no longer be imported, but primarily because fabric had to be used for millions of new uniforms.

That represented the biggest wartime change in dress. Every branch of the military service needed about a dozen styles of uniforms that varied according to season and type of duty. Beyond that, all sorts of quasi-military and volunteer organizations such as the Red Cross and the USO needed the same range of styles and sizes. In addition to uniforms for new military services such as the Women's Army Corps and the WAVES, older bodies discovered that they, too, needed new uniforms for a new type of warfare. The Army Nurse Corps, for example, adopted pants at the same time that factory women did. Nurses trapped in the jungles of Bataan soon sent word back to Washington that they wanted camouflage pants, not starched white skirts.

Simply supplying these uniforms was more than enough to strain the nation's garment industry, which also had to continue with genuine civilian needs and to give at least some attention to providing clothes for the millions of people, especially Europeans, who lost both their clothing and their clothing factories to war. Thus, the Office of War Information and other opinion-making bodies promoted conservation—but too often in a wrong-headed way that largely defeated itself. Their chief message was that people should wear clothes that used less fabric, but to many people, the new fashion guidelines meant new wardrobes. The clearest example may be the question of cuffs on men's pants: when they were eliminated to save fabric, many men responded by letting their old pants hang in the closet and bought the new, "patriotic" style.

Nor did change take place nearly quickly enough to accomplish conservation goals. Sociologist Faith Williams could see part of the long-term trend in 1943, but the change she predicted was still more the exception than the rule, even among the nation's leaders, and it would be slower than her hopeful attitude implied:

Hats have shrunk ... and many men and women go about bareheaded ... Women who used to regard long skirts as an evening necessity have taken to shorter and less formal clothes for the duration. In Washington, D.C., ... a Brotherhood of Sensible Men has adopted slacks with open-collar, short-sleeved shirts as an office uniform.

Yet such "uniforms" did not become standard, and a man who wore this sort of innovation at the War Department would

invite trouble. Any accommodation to war needs was slight, as newspapers and magazines continued to run hundreds of pages of clothing advertisements with very little notice of the war. It was not conservation that made important long-term change in dress, especially women's dress: instead, it was industrial work and women's recognition of the freedom offered by being able to choose between skirts and pants.

Women opted for safety and practicality, and as time passed and they returned to the busy life of managing both homes and jobs later in the century, they would opt for even more practicality. By the 1970s, both the mandatory hat and gloves disappeared, and the generation that first wore pants in the forties would be the most enduring devotees of the pantsuit of the seventies. Children who never saw grandmothers in anything but an apron and dress would be replaced by a generation of children who never saw their grandmothers in anything but pants, as it became permissible to wear them even to church. Grandfathers who never had been seen in anything but coat and tie, even during ostensible wartime conservation, adopted not only short sleeves, but even shorts and sandals.

Although they may not have realized it at the time, the war began permanent attitudinal change on dress in both men and women. It promoted a democracy of appearance, an overall emphasis on practicality over formality. At the same time, men and women who looked more like each other also began to discover their commonalities in other areas, and they became less rigid and more real in their relationships. Wartime change in dress was a factor in these much more important changes.

*See also:* **advertising; aircraft industry; Army Nurse Corps; Bataan; cigarettes; conservation; defense industry; munitions; rationing; shipbuilding; uniforms; WAVES; Women's Army Corps**

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## ELECTRONICS INDUSTRY

Today's computers and all of the other electronic items that govern our lives have strong origins in World War II—and women helped develop this new field. The industry was only a few decades old when the war began: the first use of radio waves to transmit an important message had been in 1912, during the famed sinking of the *Titanic*, and Radio Corporation of American (RCA) began in 1919. Commercial radio grew rapidly in the 1920s and 1930s, and RCA was developing television when the war turned virtually all production from civilian to military uses.

Although much of the work was secret and most people remained unaware of these concepts, the expansion of radio to radar arguably was the most important innovation of World War II. “Radar” was coined from “radio detection and ranging,” and the rapid development of its ability to detect an enemy's presence would prove vital. German scientists also developed radar, but they were consistently behind the Allies in research and especially in the production of devices that made this theoretical knowledge applicable to actual warfare. The Japanese were even further behind, and Allied use of the new technology was a strong factor in the eventual victory in the Pacific Theater of Operations. On both sides of the globe, fascist governments refused to allow their women to play a significant role in defense industries, and that was a crucial mistake.

In this, as other production, the work of American women was key. Britain had been the leader in radar development when the European war began in 1939, but as Germany bombed Britain's factories—and their largely female workforce—American production replaced and improved upon the new technology. Not only did women assemble detection systems, they also worked on mechanisms

to scramble German radar. The first was called “Window,” in which women helped produce precisely-cut pieces of metal that were dropped from planes to confuse German receptors. Throughout the war, assembly lines adjusted quickly to new production ideas, as corporations competed against each other—as well as against the Axis—for the best electronics.

By 1942, for example, most submarines were equipped with radar that could detect airplanes thirty miles away—but within a year, new and better systems were being installed at shipyards, where, again, many women worked. Radar was important in the victory over Germany in the Atlantic Ocean, which in turn was crucial to getting American soldiers and equipment to the European Theater of Operation. By the time of the 1944 D-Day invasion, transmitters were still more sophisticated.

In addition to RCA, among other major electronic companies that saw explosive growth because of the war were American Telephone & Telegraph, General Electric, Raytheon, Westinghouse, and more. These and others contracted with the government, especially the War Department, and because the Labor Department (under Secretary Frances Perkins) insisted that employers use all available labor, companies hired women and racial minorities for these new jobs. Most workers for these companies already were represented by unions, especially the Communication Workers of America and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, and so for most female employees, these were their best-paid jobs ever.

As men were drafted and women replaced them in industry, as much as 85 percent of the expanded work force in electronics was female. Many employers preferred to hire women for this and other precision assembly work: as





This 1944 photo shows an electrical engineer working on the physics of creating electronic tubes. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

in the munitions industry, they believed that women were more likely than men to pay careful attention to the repetitious, tedious detail that the job required. Photographs of the era's electronics companies invariably feature women, often focusing intensely through magnifiers while they use tiny tools to tuck tiny components into devices intended for myriad obscure uses. Strong habits of cleanliness also were important: lives literally depended on not allowing a stray hair or speck of dirt to find its way into an instrument. Whether the product would measure air pressure in a weather balloon or guide a submarine through dark waters or send secret radio signals through the night sky, every part of its manufacture demanded accuracy.

Despite the exacting standards, progress in electronics moved very quickly, and a portion of that rapid pace can be attributed to female employees who saw the analogies between their new work and their lifelong habits. Laurence Hammond conducted a rare study of this phenomenon and cited many cases, both in and out of the electronics industry. "Hundreds of women," he said, "have made suggestions which have been adopted by their employers." Some women won awards for innovation, and in the electronics industry, he highlighted two cases:

Threading wires through flexible tubing ... was a slow job with considerable spoilage of tubing. Mrs. Quincy Smith remarked, "If I had a thing like this to do at home, I'd use a tape needle." She proceeded to improvise one ... It saved 4,992 man-hours of labor this year ...

Among the winners the archetype is Mrs. Mary Pritchard Vaughn of Baltimore ... She worked out a design for simplifying production by arranging the resistors and condensers in the radio compass. Mary Vaughn's idea saved 34,000 man-hours at the Bendix plant in the past year—enough hours to provide compasses for 3,400 planes. She was awarded the

highest prize ... a four-figure check. Then she went home to await the arrival of her baby.

The waste of mental resources implied was not noted: the civilian world did not encourage mothers to work, and the military world discharged women who became pregnant—whether or not that was best either for the woman or for the national interest. Some military women also played a role in developing electronics, however, especially the Navy's WAVES. They often had degrees in math and science, and although the Navy did not allow them to leave the continental U.S. until late in the war, they worked with new technologies, especially calculations of gun trajectories from ships. The Women's Army Corps (WAC) did go overseas early in the war, and especially in England, they worked with new and secret systems in radio and cryptology.

Beyond radar and its many applications (early microwave ovens, for example, were called "radar ranges"), the era's other hugely important electronic genesis was in computers. That word, too, was largely unfamiliar. It originally referred to a person, not a machine: some of the first "computers" were women at the Harvard Observatory who measured distances between stars by doing paper-and-pencil calculations all day. By World War II, the corporation now known as IBM so dominated the still-infant computer industry that it and the machines it produced were used as both the common and proper noun. News articles sometimes referred to computers as "International Business Machines"—in the same way that today "xerox" is both a corporation and a generic term for the machine it first produced.

The most likely users of these early computers were "government girls," civilians who worked in Washington, DC, offices as "keypunch operators." They entered data into machines that literally punched holes into paper cards that

then were fed into other machines for calculation. Other civilian women employed by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the forerunner of today's spy agencies, also were on the ground floor of electronic inventions, especially those made for eavesdropping on enemy communications. A few women played seminal roles in computer development, especially WAVE Grace Hopper, who wrote the first well-known code for programmers. As with radar, WACs, especially cryptologists in England, also helped give birth to a computerized world.

Still other civilian women experimented with assembling electronic circuits in the most efficient way, as miniaturization became a chief industry goal: early computers were huge by modern standards, taking up whole rooms. Again, some personnel managers came to believe that women had a particular gift for this work and tried hard to recruit them into an industry still mysterious to most of the public. Massachusetts' Raytheon Corporation, for example, wanted female employees badly enough that they served coffee and sandwiches to applicants who happened to be there at mid-day and reimbursed carfare for interviewees. Much more progressive than most corporations, its managers told writer Josephine Ripley that they also allowed women who had home obligations to "select any four-or-five hour shift they like between eight ... and five."

Electronics production had perhaps the widest geographical range of any defense industry. The first factories developed near the aircraft manufacturers around Los Angeles, but the industry soon expanded all over the nation, looking especially for places where there was a surplus of female labor. The result was new centers of technology in places that had been known for agriculture, such as Denver, Austin, and Minneapolis. Late in the war, *Business Week* hailed one of the early spin-offs of such enterprises, a "manless industry" in Minneapolis, where Strato Equipment was headed by a woman who hired only women. With consultants from the University of Minnesota and the state's famed Mayo Clinic, these women researched and designed the forerunners of spacesuits, garments that enabled pilots to withstand the ailments associated with flying high into thinning atmosphere. The only male involved was their test dummy.

*See also:* **British women; cryptography; D-Day; defense industries; draft; European Theater of Operation; "government girls;" Hopper, Grace; males, comparisons with; Office of Strategic Services; Pacific Theater of Operation; Perkins, Frances; radio; Signal Corps; Women's Army Corps; WAVES**

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### EMPLOYERS/EMPLOYMENT CHANGES

The four years of American involvement in World War II may have done more to change the nature of modern employment than the previous forty years of worker activism had done. Women participated in major strikes early in the twentieth century, especially in the garment and textile industries, but the results often were ephemeral and varied greatly by state labor laws—or the lack of such. When the economy plummeted in the 1920s, the Roosevelt administration of the 1930s tried to reverse the Great Depression by adopting federal labor laws and supporting unions—but the economy was so bad for so long that most women were grateful for any job and felt powerless to demand better pay and conditions from employers.

The war reversed that relationship. Instead of needy women competing with each other for badly-paid jobs, employers competed with each other in begging women to go to work in defense plants. Media in almost every city conducted recruitment campaigns, urging women who never had thought of themselves as anything but housewives to help win the war by taking paid jobs. Indeed, as more and more of the male workforce was drafted, female labor was so badly needed that, with the Austin-Wadsworth Bill and other proposals, Congress seriously considered drafting women for industrial work.

The Roosevelt administration opposed this, arguing that conscription would create unnecessary bureaucracy and that production goals could and should be met with voluntary labor. In the end, that spirit of volunteerism was hugely important not only to victory, but also to the way that female labor and management ultimately influenced each other. As millions of women entered the labor force, the impact on both women and the businesses that hired them brought major economic and societal change.

Perhaps the first positive effect that management noticed was that the dearth of talented labor that they decried was not necessarily real: they had overlooked some potential employees merely because they were female. Mechanically-gifted women in the past not only had been ignored, but often made to feel like freaks, and the war gave them an opportunity to use their abilities proudly. One told *National Geographic* that she "had always loved machines, but never had a chance to get her hands on anything like *this* before." The machine she spoke of was a "big hydraulic shaper," which she used with such precision that she trimmed the barrels of anti-aircraft guns to within one-thousandth of an inch. Her shipyard boss

confirmed her skill—but still accepted gender traditions: she “should have been a boy,” he said. “Except that she’s better than most of them.”

Over and over again, investigators discovered cases of women who had innate abilities and who influenced commerce by applying their common sense and housework experience to industrial needs. Writer Laurence Hammond, for instance, cited:

Gray-haired Mrs. Cora Kepner helps make rubber life rafts at the Goodrich plant in Akron ... Putting on the “abrasion strips” was a slow hand job. Mrs Kepner observed it was something like handling pastry and she suggested using giant rolling pins ... It works fine, as have forty-four other suggestions she has made which have won her \$490.

In the same plant, Mrs. Carrie Syler is one of thousands of women who make barrage balloons ... The work made Mrs. Syler think of her home dressmaking experience. She always used pinking shears to scallop the raw edges of seams ... Why not try them on the balloons? It is standard practice now ...

At the Fort Worth plant of Consolidated-Vultee, they used adhesive tape to hold materials temporarily in place on ... bombers until they could be riveted. Why not giant clothespins, asked Mrs. Mary C. Shelton ... They save miles of expensive tape ...

Any woman who has made her own dresses knows that it saves time and material to place all parts of the pattern on the goods before starting to cut. Ida Basham ... suggested this plain homebody technique would also save material in laying out patterns on sheet metal. Now wouldn’t you think even a man would have thought of that? It has saved 4,320 man-hours a year in the one plant.

It is notable that all but one of the women cited had “Mrs.” attached to her name, despite managers’ clear preference for hiring unmarried women. Because they were experienced in housework, these women also probably were older than the average “desirable” worker, and yet age prejudice endured unquestioned. The media, which was glad to give attention to the breakdown of gender traditions in industry, seldom addressed the issue of age. Although older women proved excellent workers, especially defying management’s expectations of absenteeism, they repeatedly had to prove themselves. Most managers spent the war looking for the mythical twenty-five-year-old woman with fifteen years of experience.

The same was true in terms of educational credentials. Writer Beatrice Oppenheim may have overstated the case when she enthused: “college graduates that have degrees earned in naval architecture, engineering, or higher mathematics are finding the jobs they have always dreamed about but were unable to achieve in the past because of their sex.” While that was true, it also was true that countless women still did not get jobs in their fields that were equivalent with their abilities. Even top women in the organic sciences had trouble using the knowledge they had, including botanist Fanny-Fern Davis and future Nobel Prize winner Barbara McClintock. Both got better jobs during the war, but especially

in Davis’ case, it was temporary and tenuous and ended when the war did. The same was true with other organic sciences. Although companies such as DuPont Chemical would seem to have had a crying need for them, a number of women with degrees in chemistry and biology were found working instead in aircraft factories—a newer industry that recruited and welcomed women.

While women in the sciences did not get as much opportunity as they should have, other women, especially those with expertise in industrial psychology, had a major impact on business. The war caused many male managers to rethink their schedules and to realize that they would be more effective if they spent their time on the production issues of their particular business and hired other people as personnel managers. The idea of separate corporate divisions for what is now called “human resources” developed largely because of this. Managers who were writing contracts with military agencies, retooling assembly lines for new products, finding scarce supplies, and dealing with an assortment of new problems were, in fact, too busy to attend carefully to these new female employees—and yet, interviewing and hiring and training them also was crucial.

The solution was to hire women willing to spend time with the potential new employee, to discover whether or not she and the job were good matches. Appreciable bias greeted these first women hired to hire other women—as with the executive who told *Time* that female supervisors would not work because such women axiomatically were “cats.” As other companies made this change and saw positive results, however, attitudes improved. *Business Week* analyzed the situation well when, about a year after the war began, it said:

Prejudice against women supervisors is less pronounced. Any man is likely to feel that he knows all about his factory, but even the most self-sufficient male executive will admit that he doesn’t know all about women.

Another plant manager said in *Harper’s* that he soon realized that the disciplinary techniques he had used with men were not only unnecessary with women, but were actively demoralizing: when he pointed out defective work, he “was met with tears and he did not understand them any better than he does his wife’s.” By emphasizing this excusable, gently laughable failure to understand women, male managers felt free to hire female personnel chiefs—who humanized the factory for everyone. Most of the changes these women made proved permanent, even after most female employees left with the war’s end. Managers learned to drop much of their earlier adversarial attitudes and began treating employees with the respect necessary to work together for common goals.

The change was so noticeable that some women who always had worked were ironically yet understandably ambivalent about welcoming the new workers and their new ways. About a year after U.S. entrance into the war, the Women’s Bureau of the Department of Labor did a study of some seven hundred women and reported that “older employees resent the fact that they worked without increases in pay for years



and now new employees earn as much as they do.” In time, though, these lower-class women would benefit from the changes that were necessary to induce middle-class women to go to work. Many of those changes were long overdue and simple to implement, but older workers never had the courage or incentive to insist on them.

Prewar employees, for example, typically brought lunches that they ate at their machine, and if they wanted a change of scene there was no choice but, as the Women’s Bureau reported, “the toilet” or “their car.” Many employers did not provide coffee or any hot drink, and some kept workplaces so cold that “girls must either smuggle coats into the room or go through a lot of red tape to get permission to get their coats.” The new middle-class worker demanded better treatment, and soon managers were installing cafeterias or at least canteens, which provided hot drinks in winter and iced ones in summer. According to *Harper’s*:

Before the war few if any plants gave much thought to feeding their employees ... Now the plant manager is beginning to wake up to the fact that a hot balanced meal is essential to keep production up ... Some workers have not enough to eat at home, what with shopping difficulties, and the limitations of ration points. Sperry [electronics] has a modern cafeteria seating fifteen hundred people ... a dietician controls the menus ... At Boeing [aircraft] a white tractor pulls a train of cafeteria trailers, each a self-contained unit. These stop every two hundred and fifty feet along the half-mile long aisles ... One Ohio plant is feeding several thousand workers Vitamin A rations to improve their sight and protect them from eye fatigue.

Perhaps the most sensible change was the easiest—providing seats for employees who did not need to stand. One plant manager told *Harper’s* that merely seating tired workers had increased production 23 percent. Other changes were more innovative. New public-address systems allowed announcements that gave workers a sense of being part of a team effort, as well as offering relaxing music. Some companies introduced newsletters. Raytheon, a major electronics manufacturer, made its graveyard-shift workers feel better about missing out on Saturday nights by showing a mid-night movie. Suggestion boxes and prizes for innovation, as indicated above, became common. Annual picnics became more elaborate than earlier. Employees were encouraged to form clubs, and some held parties or played ballgames in off-time—a particular benefit to women who were lonely in the crowd of wartime boom towns.

Elinore Herrick, one of the top personnel managers in the nation, cited changes she made at Todd Shipyards—common sense things that ultimately benefited everyone, male and female, new or old worker:

Often the company’s first introduction to ... sanitary codes may come through the employment of women ... The idea of shower curtains ... seemed a little startling, not to say unnecessary. Hand cream for women was another innovation that seemed a trifle “fussy.” I pointed to the practice of the experienced men ... who always greased every inch

of exposed skin heavily, ... so the purchasing department investigated hand cream.

With vague job descriptions and even vaguer authority, these new personnel managers had to have an eye for such detail—as well as an ability to see the overall production picture. They also used subtle teaching techniques to retrain foremen in how to be bosses to this different kind of employee. Many experienced men understandably resented the changed methods and the women who implemented them, so it was essential for the female manager to be extremely diplomatic and to prove her worth to these valuable longtime employees. Perhaps the most important thing was for her to be frequently present on the factory floor, straightening out little problems before they became big ones. Writer Mary Kelly explained that such problem prevention began at the hiring stage, with a personnel manager who could “see the value of a sociable attitude, a neighborly exchange of conversation about sons at the front,” before introducing “the rules of the business world.”

Indifferent employers with no tolerance for sociability certainly continued to exist, especially in small, interior towns where they did not have to compete for labor. The greatest changes were in factories on the coasts, where both shipyards and aircraft manufacturers concentrated, and in university towns, where new electronics companies sought both female labor and innovative minds. Aircraft and electronics, as two relatively infant industries that fed on each other, also were the mostly likely to adopt new benefits aimed at recruiting and retaining the war’s new female employee.

In Santa Monica, California, for example, Douglas Aircraft provided one of the first in-house child care centers. Pratt-Whitney and Bell, both aircraft manufacturers, adopted shared shifts so that two women could share one full-time job; Raytheon’s version was similar, allowing women to pick four or five hours among the traditional eight. According to labor expert Mary Heaton Vorse, employers in New Jersey and New York alleviated women’s shopping chores—a significant task because of wartime rationing—by having “a representative of a certain store [who] comes to the plant every morning, takes food orders from women workers, and brings food back at the end of the shift.” Some large manufacturers even persuaded local retailers to open branches in their plants.

The war’s single most important innovative employer may have been Henry J. Kaiser. Based on the West Coast, Kaiser Industries led the way with child care centers at shipyards. His companies also featured carry-out food—a real time-saver in an era when almost everything had to be made from scratch, when there was no fast-food—nor freezers, microwave ovens, or dishwashers. Susan B. Anthony II, niece of the great suffragist, wrote a book promoting the changes that took place because of the war; at Kaiser, she said:

A mother can buy the main dish and dessert of her evening meal for her entire family, picking up these when she calls for her child after a day’s work. The plan here is to prepare those foods which take a long cooking period.

A menu suggesting other foods which can be prepared quickly to supplement the home service food is furnished to the mother one week in advance. Menus for all meals served to the children at school.. are also sent.

The company also built apartments for its workers at Vanport City, Oregon, and in this planned community, Anthony reported: "working wives, instead of coming home from the day, swing, or graveyard shift to start another eight hour job of marketing, cooking, and washing, eat at the cafeteria operated for them and their husbands, and for single workers." The result of such innovations that allowed women to concentrate on their paid jobs was dramatic. Kaiser shipyards broke all production records, as assembly-line techniques allowed an entire ship to be completed in less than a week.

Help with food was much more common than help with other kinds of housework, and laundry was much more time-consuming then than now. Some companies provided fresh uniforms daily that saved on laundry chores, although often this was done more in the corporate than in the employees' interest: the munitions industry was most likely to take care of laundry because garments that had been exposed to gunpowder could explode. In the postwar world, defense plants would become appliance factories offering automatic washers and dryers, but for the duration, new equipment of any sort was not manufactured. For this and a host of other housework-related reasons, it is clear that the standard forty-eight-hour work week required women to make huge sacrifices of health and happiness.

Saturdays would become half-days and then complete days off in most postwar companies, but during it, six days of eight hours each was routine—and some women worked more. Ruth Millard, for example, used her regular schedule of fifty-three hours a week as the title of her *Saturday Evening Post* article about war work—and that did not count the commute of this middle-aged woman. The fair total of the time was she away from New England home was sixty-six hours weekly. "People sometimes ask me," Millard said:

"Nine hours on your feet? Don't you get terribly tired?"

Well, naturally. I make no bones about admitting that I do ... Of course we don't take it without giving way, now and then. I understand that nervous breakdowns among women in factories have doubled. Of course they have ... It's just eat, sleep, and no other life left. Sunday is no good when you sleep through half of it from sheer exhaustion.

Psychological pressures were intensified by the lack of any visible end to it all. No one knew when the war would be over, nor could anyone truly comfort the women—most of them—who endlessly worried about the equally unpredictable future of their husbands or sons. Nell Giles, for example, wrote of the shock she felt when the time off that she had been anticipating was revoked:

All vacations were cancelled today ... Many of the girls have husbands in the service, and were planning to visit them before they leave for foreign duty ... [We] have only

Sunday for recreation, and not always that. If there is extra work to be done, the entire force works on Sunday, too. There are no holidays—not even the Fourth of July! But after the first blow—all vacations cancelled—THERE WAS NO GRUMBLING. Everyone understands WHY there is no time for vacation.

After the war, when production was no longer as urgent, model personnel managers would make occupational health and even mental-health counseling a part of their tasks. Time off would include not only Saturdays and regular vacations, but also more holidays and even "personal days" for which the employee did not have to explain her absence. Safety on the job also would receive a new emphasis, as management learned during the war that accidents were not only personal tragedies, but that they also caused big dips in production. New safety promotion probably would be most apparent in the chemical and munitions industries, where some prewar employers seem to have accepted occasional fatal accidents as the cost of doing business.

Josephine von Miklos, for example, said that at a rural New England munitions plant where she worked, management seemed to prefer paying the era's excess-profits tax rather than invest in safety. Machines often malfunctioned, and training was virtually nonexistent: she had worked there for some time before she realized how dangerous it was. After major explosions in Elkton, Maryland, and Pine Bluff, Arkansas, killed dozens of women, there was improvement, as some companies, for example, began "corn colleges" in which new employees learned to load shells by practicing with corn instead of explosive pellets.

African-American women were most likely to work in that industry, attracted by the "hazard pay" common in munitions plants. Throughout the range of defense manufacturing, African-American women also taught management about their untapped abilities. At the Pine Bluff Chemical Warfare Arsenal that exploded, for instance, it was a black woman, Ann Marie Young, who earned the highest honor that the War Department gave to civilians for her valor in saving others from the fire. According to writer Kathryn Blood, a brigadier general praised Young's "calm judgment and presence of mind."

Because labor was so essential to victory, authorities tried to insist that companies with government contracts hire able and willing workers, without regard to race, gender, or other long-accepted prejudices. The Department of Labor (headed by a woman, Frances Perkins) did its best to encourage this early form of affirmative action, but it was a wholly new thing to almost all managers. Trying to discern the unfamiliar concept of equal opportunity, some went to Washington for advice—so often that one War Manpower Commission official responded tiredly to a *Fortune* inquiry:

We have so many requests from nervous employers for special material ... that I've asked my secretary to go out and buy a rubber stamp to use on every printed piece we send out, reading: "This includes women, Negroes, handicapped, Chinamen, and Spaniards." The only difference

between training men and women in industry is in the toilet facilities.

This glimmer of equal opportunity would grow in the postwar world, as would most progressive changes introduced during the war. A few disappeared, especially in-house child care and shopping services, but, in general, the war caused tremendous attitudinal change that benefited both men and women. Never again would personnel managers revert to the attitudes of earlier times, when workers could be treated badly without consequence. Managers learned that increased production was directly correlated to a healthier, happier work force—and women played a huge role in teaching them that lesson.

*See also:* **absenteeism; African-American women; aircraft workers; Austin-Wadsworth Bill; Business & Professional Women; child care; Davis, Fanny-Fern; defense industries; electronics industry; housing; draft; males, comparisons with; rationing; recruitment; shipyards; underutilization; unions**

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### ENEMIES/ENEMY ALIENS

Predicting who the enemy would be (or even that there would be a World War II) was far from clear when the conflict began in the 1930s. Three widely-separated locales were victimized by totalitarian governments in that decade: Japan attacked Manchuria and coastal China; Italy bombed the North African country of Ethiopia; and Germany, under Adolf Hitler and his Nazi supporters, "annexed" Austria and Czechoslovakia. Jewish families in eastern Europe, especially from Austria and Hungary, thus began joining German Jews as targets of legalized discrimination and, ultimately, extermination.

The formal European war began in September 1939, when Germany invaded Poland and Britain responded in defense of Germany's neighbors. The following spring, Germany quickly conquered Denmark, Norway, Holland, and Belgium—although resistance fighters, including women, would be active in these areas throughout their occupation; the Dutch and Danes especially took risks to save Jewish neighbors. At the same time, Hitler's Italian ally, Benito Mussolini and his Fascist Party, annexed Albania and invaded Greece, Egypt, and other parts of North Africa.

By summer, German armies entered France from the north, while Italians struck from the south, forcing the surrender of crucial France. In all of these conquered territories, Nazis found right-wingers willing to abet them. France's ultra-conservative government collaborated with Nazis in sending French Jews, labor union leaders, lesbians, and other leftist women to concentration camps in eastern Europe. Because of intimidation or old animosities or other factors, Ireland, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland maintained neutrality, and Britain stood alone as the sole defender of European democracy.

France collapsed in June, and in August, Germany began regular bombing over Britain, killing women more than men or children. The following summer, Hitler—who despised economic communism as much as he loathed political democracy—invaded the Soviet Union. His June 1941 invasion not only broke his pact with the Soviets, but also ultimately would be a fatal mistake: Germany fought the rest of the war against armies to both its east and west.

Despite pleas from Britain, the United States did not enter the war until Japan surprised the world by bombing Hawaii's Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Even then, Germany and Italy, in accordance with their previous agreements with Japan, declared war on the United States before Congress declared war on them. By December 11, Congress had done so, and the worldwide war was official.

Until then, the 1913–18 conflict in Europe had been called "the Great War"—but because this one obviously would be greater, writers began to refer to the earlier event as World War I and the current one as World War II. The enemy nations of Germany, Italy, and Japan had been termed the "Axis" (or "Pact of Steel") by Mussolini, while "Allies" was the English word for the United States, Britain, and the Soviet Union. Thus, German Americans, Italian Americans, and Japanese Americans were deemed "enemy aliens."



The 1940 census showed that 8.7 percent of the U.S. population had been born elsewhere. Italians, at 1,623,579, were the largest group; they composed 14.2 percent of the foreign-born total. Germans were second at 1,237,772 and 10.8 percent. People of Japanese ancestry were infinitesimal by comparison; they accounted for less than 1 percent, but because they were the most identifiable enemy aliens, they were most persecuted. Their experience was so different from that of European immigrants that it is treated separately.

Foreign-born presence also varied widely by state. New York, long the entry point for immigrants, had the most, with 25.7 percent of its population born abroad. California was second; as the entry point for Pacific immigrants, most of its 11.1 percent were Asians. Massachusetts followed with 7.5 percent: its largest group was Italian; New Jersey and Pennsylvania were close behind. People born in Germany were more dispersed, but they were a significant factor in Illinois, Michigan, and Ohio, where the foreign born averaged about 5 percent of the population. In contrast, many states, especially in the Rocky Mountains and Deep South, had foreign-born rates of 0.1 percent.

German Americans were the best assimilated of these groups, but even they felt an uncomfortable *deja vu*. Although their families may have been in America for generations, people with German names had suffered appreciable prejudice during World War I, when propaganda against “the Huns” was used to stir patriotism. Schools stopped teaching the German language; Lutheran churches that traditionally worshiped in German were attacked for doing so; and some zealots even insisted that “sauerkraut” be renamed “Liberty Cabbage.” World War II, however, caused little repetition of such attitudes. Among the alleviating factors was the infinitely greater animosity towards Japanese Americans; the fact that German Americans were better assimilated than they had been in the first war; and especially that they had become so numerous that this war could not be successfully fought without their support.

Still, some people with German names found themselves under investigation, and according to an Associated Press story on the subject, ultimately “the FBI roundup of German Americans during World War II” numbered about eleven thousand. Suspicion increased after Nazi submarines did, in fact, deposit potential saboteurs on the East Coast, with incidents ranging from Florida to Maine. In June 1942, for example, six women were arrested for their role in planning to assist German men who landed on Long Island; several of the men were executed. Most of the men had previously lived in the United States, understood its industrial system, and had the skills to do substantial damage—but because of a lack of evidence, the women who were arrested were not prosecuted.

To some government agents, however, German Americans who had never become citizens were inherently suspicious—and these were most likely to be women. There traditionally had been little incentive for women to do so: the Homestead Act, under which millions of Germans received free land, did

not require citizenship; and until just two decades prior to World War II, most American women could not vote. Nor were immigrant women accustomed to seeing themselves as full human beings worthy of rights. Women in continental Europe would not vote until after World War II, and with American women also legally defined as something less than full citizens, there was little reason for female immigrants to go through the naturalization process to drop their alien status.

The result was women like Anna Martha Braun Otto, who was born in Germany in 1860 and had lived in Minnesota since age five. A widow since 1898, she struggled to support her eight children, including working as a church janitor. But when U.S. Attorney General Nicholas Biddle issued orders in January 1942 that all enemy aliens must register, she was among those affected. At age eighty-two, she filed paperwork with the Alien Registration Division of the FBI and was fingerprinted. The notarized form listed her as weighing one hundred pounds and having white hair, while her shaky handwriting reveals an old lady terrified by the possibility of deportation to a country she could not remember.

Most German immigration had been in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, while most Italians came later, from the late nineteenth to the early twentieth centuries. Even more than German culture, Italians discouraged female assertiveness—with the result that, when World War II began, their women were appreciably less assimilated: many did not speak English, and few had bothered to become citizens. Moreover, because Italian Americans had not gone through a World War I experience comparable to that of German Americans, they generally were less wary about expressing enthusiasm for Mussolini, especially in the 1930s when he seemed to improving Italy. Although support for his fascist government was far from unanimous, some Italian-American women were so enthralled about the way that Mussolini appeared to be restoring the glory of Rome that they melted down jewelry, even wedding rings, and donated the gold to his cause.

Earlier than most people, famed physicist Enrico Fermi understood the dangers that fascism held for science, and late in 1938, he, Laura Fermi, and their young children came to the United States; Laura Fermi later wrote a book about their experience. When Italy declared war against the U.S. late in 1941, they automatically became enemy aliens. One result was that it could take as long as ten days for Enrico to get the paperwork to travel from Manhattan, where he worked on the first phase of the atomic bomb, to Chicago, where further research was underway. Worse, though, the family was terribly frightened of arrest when their young son tried to impress his playmates with the fact that he had seen Hitler and Mussolini. The Fermis got rid of anything that might connect them to the enemy, even burning the children’s Italian storybooks.

Most Italian Americans, of course, never had seen Mussolini—and support for him quickly faded after the war declaration. In an ironic way, the lack of assimilation among Italian-American women proved to be their best protection: because most lived in self-segregated communities, and

because married women did not work outside the home except in dire need, it was relatively easy to continue in their own little worlds, ignored by the wider world. Their sons who had been born in America, of course, had to register for the draft like other young men, but hundreds of thousands did not wait for the draft and volunteered. Both self-contained communities and traditional machismo brought peer pressure to volunteer and fight, and women were among the community leaders who organized memorials to honor Italian-American men who died.

At the same time, military officers often were suspicious of enthusiastic Italian-American volunteers, especially early in the war. Those who wanted to serve as pilots or anything out of the ordinary found that FBI agents interviewed their former teachers, checked out what books they had read—and struggled to define “enemy alien” to frantic Italian-speaking mothers. The FBI at least briefly incarcerated some three thousand Italian Americans. In addition to investigating individuals, Italian communities in general were under surveillance. In Trenton, New Jersey, for example, where some twenty-thousand Italian Americans lived, there was a ban on short-wave radios because of the possibility that immigrants might communicate with the now-enemy old country.

Mail from Italy, of course, ceased for the duration, and the greatest strain of the war for Italian-American women may have been worry over their loved ones back home. Often these were close family members. Most Americans of German descent had immigrated sufficiently long ago that cousins or perhaps elderly siblings were likely to be their closest connection, but for Italians, those who had stayed behind were apt to be parents and relatively young siblings. As American bombs fell on Italy, they could not help but have mixed feelings.

That ambivalence would be eased when Italian Americans could credibly say that other Italians forced Mussolini out. When the Allies—including American women in the Army Nurse Corps and the Women’s Army Corps—invaded the Italian peninsula from North Africa in 1943, a *coup d’état* of his own former supporters placed Mussolini under house arrest. Hitler’s troops dramatically rescued him, but he lived out the rest of the war as a puppet, ostensibly governing German-controlled northern Italy. When Germany collapsed in April 1945, Italian resistance fighters captured him and his mistress, Clara Petacci, as they fled toward Switzerland; they were shot and their bodies hung for desecration in Milan.

Americans generally avoided talking about both Clara Petacci and Eva Braun, Hitler’s mistress who died with him. Both regimes routinely used the rhetoric of family ideals, and both especially lauded women in their roles as mothers of warrior sons. Although he had no children, Hitler demanded that he be called *Führer*, or father, while Mussolini constrained himself merely to *Il Duce*, or the leader. Totalitarianism in Europe was so complete, however, that very few people questioned the contradiction between what these men said about family fidelity and what, in fact, they did. In America, presumably totalitarianism was not the reason why

the issue was ignored. Instead, opinion leaders then (and to a lesser extent, still) seldom think about personal accountability from men on issues of sex. Neither in Britain nor America did the media point out the gap between the fascists’ words on the sanctity of marriage and the family, while simultaneously living with mistresses.

Finally, there were, of course, Jews among both enemy groups of Italians and Germans, but Jewish women’s experience differed tremendously because of ethnicity, not nationality. Both Jewish women and Japanese-American women merit separate attention.

**See also:** **Army Nurse Corps; British women; Chinese-American women; European Theater of Operation; draft; Jewish women; Japanese-American women; Manhattan Project; North Africa; Pearl Harbor; refugees; Women’s Army Corps**

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### ENLISTMENT STANDARDS

No matter what the nature of the military service, the pervasive point on enlistment standards is that they were always

higher for women than for men. Whether the specification was in regard to age, education, or another factor, it was harder for women to enlist; a woman's credentials always had to be superior to those of a man in a comparable category. Moreover, especially on the issue of age, she could expect to be squeezed at both ends: women had to be older than men to enlist, but their maximum age limits also were younger than those for men. The extent of such discriminatory standards varied in the different branches of the military and at different times during the war, but the overall rule was consistently true.

Nor did meeting these higher standards mean that women could expect to earn rank or promotion commensurate with men. For example, in the oldest women's military corps, the Army Nurse Corps (ANC) and the Navy Nurse Corps (NNC), women had to be graduate nurses before they enlisted. These mandatory educational credentials meant that all nurses entered as lieutenants—but many, even most, stayed at that rank. That was the case in the peacetime military, and it would remain the case throughout World War I—even though male officers in the regular military could expect to be repeatedly promoted during the war.

The two nursing corps had existed since the early twentieth century. The Women's Army Corps (initially the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps) was the first military unit that did not require a woman to pay for her own education before enlisting. It began on May 15, 1942, and initial enlistment standards were fairly straightforward: a woman had to be of good health and character; between five and six feet tall, with a minimum weight of 105 and a maximum of 200 pounds; and be at least 21 years old.

The last requirement would prove most detrimental to recruitment. The age minimum meant that an eighteen-year-old female high-school graduate had to spend three years simply growing older before she could enlist. The eighteen-year-old males in her class could join immediately, with or without a high-school diploma—and seventeen-year-old boys could enlist with parental permission. There was very little public discussion about this age disparity. Perhaps because the entire concept of non-nursing women in the military was new, it seemed as given as a law of nature that they be legal adults. Almost no one pointed out the contrast to marriage laws: every state seemed to assume that young women were more mature than young men by writing marriage-license requirements that provided a lower minimum age for the woman, while the man had to be older. Minimum female ages for marriage were likely to be in the teens, not age twenty-one.

The adult world offered little advice on what a young woman should do until she was old enough to enlist. High schools introduced military prep courses for boys during the war, but girls were discouraged from taking up space in them. *Education for Victory*, a federal publication for educators, warned guidance counselors that girls' "interests would not be served" by their enrollment, and that their presence "might even reduce the effectiveness...for male participants." Alternatives were vague: "A high-school girl who thinks she

may want to enlist ... can best prepare herself ... by continuing the preparation she would pursue if anything happened to keep her from such enlistment."

Maximum ages did not receive much media attention—but the WAAC discovered almost before it began that there were many more women in this category than anyone had expected. Enough older women wanted to enlist that the corps raised its maximum age from forty-five to fifty even before the first classes started. The comparable age for men, however, remained different. Males eighteen to sixty-five were registered for the draft, and some older men—whose service would have been rejected had they been women—successfully volunteered.

The WAAC was only forty-five days old when the Navy began its WAVES. Its commander, former Wellesley College president Mildred McAfee, set out to establish a superior image. According to *Time*, the WAVES wanted women to have:

a college degree, or two years of college work plus at least two years' professional or business experience applicable to naval jobs ... Especially wanted: women who majored in engineering, astronomy, meteorology, electronics, physics, mathematics, metallurgy, business statistics and modern foreign languages.

The third non-nursing unit was the Coast Guard's SPARS, formed late in 1942. Its requirements were spelled out by historian John Tilley:

Applicants had to be between 20 and 36 years old (the upper limit for officers was 50) and have no children under the age of 18. Enlisted women had to have completed two years of high school and officers two years of college. Married women "may enlist provided their husbands are not in the Coast Guard. Unmarried women must agree not to marry until after they have finished their period of training. After training, a SPAR may marry a civilian or a serviceman who is not in the Coast Guard." A SPAR who became pregnant "must submit her resignation promptly."

It was rarely pointed out that two of the four directors of the new women's units did, in fact, have children under eighteen: Ruth Cheney Streeter of the Women Marines left a fifteen-year-old daughter in New Jersey when she went to Washington, D.C., and WAAC Director Oveta Culp Hobby had two children even younger. But rules for the troops are not necessarily the same as for those at the top, and few women with children were in circumstances that allowed them to join the military.

The most harmful enlistment standard by far was the minimum age for women. By the time that the SPARS and the last, the Women Marines, were underway, both the WAVES and the WAAC had dropped their minimum age to twenty—but none of the four female services ever dropped down into the late teen years as did the male services. The result was that much enthusiasm was wasted, as women had to get on with life after high school and could not wait for their twentieth birthday. Ohio's Bettie Grey was an exception who did



## ENLISTMENT STANDARDS

wait, but also an excellent example of this underutilization of willing resources:

After Pearl Harbor I was ever so anxious to join the Waves, but I had to wait almost two more years until my 20th birthday. In the meantime, I made Navy scrapbooks and saw the movie, "Crash Dive!" seventeen times! On my birthday morning, I was at the recruiting station, signing up.

Virginia Creed was old enough to join the WAVES at its creation, but had to fight her way past other enlistment standards. Although she had a good job in Philadelphia, she said:

By the fall of 1942, I was getting restless once again and told my family that I thought I would join the Navy, as I liked the blue uniform. My Dad said I could go to work at a Philadelphia Navy yard, but I replied that I might as well join up and see the rest of the country on the taxpayers' money.

Getting into the Navy at that time was tough—they had strict weight limits, and I didn't fit them. So I had to lose weight, go back in a month and try again ... [I] was in the 1st class of Navy women at Hunter [College]. After getting there ... I flunked the medical [exam, and], so was discharged. Went back to Phila. and saw a specialist ... It took until June 25th before I received a phone call that I could re-enlist.

Marital status was still another enlistment hurdle that applied especially to women. The WAAC accepted married women from the beginning, leaving this to the personal decision of the potential enlistee. The WAVES took married women only if their children were over eighteen and if their husbands were not in the military. WAVES recruiters soon discovered, however, that the latter category represented the married woman who most wanted to join—women whose husbands had gone to war and who wanted to do the same. The Navy compromised, accepting WAVES whose husbands were in the Army, Marines, or Coast Guard, but not in the Navy.

Some naval officers openly stated their concern that a wife could end up outranking her husband. They found this possibility unfathomable, even though by that time, many army nurses—who were automatically officers—outranked their enlisted husbands. Finally, late in 1943, naval leadership dropped the prohibition against a husband in the Navy. Unless he was stationed within the United States, however, WAVES still could not hope to be near their husbands because no WAVES were allowed to leave the continental U.S. The WAAC, in contrast, sent women overseas as soon as they were trained.

Nurses in both the Army and Navy had been going overseas for decades, but those corps were the most conservative on marriage, with some officers almost frantically dedicated to keeping their members unwed. The Army realized that it would have to accept applications from married nurses in late 1942, but again the Navy was more recalcitrant. Not until 1944, when 80 percent of all separations from the NNC were because of marriage, did the Navy finally permit its nurses to wed. Still the victory was an incomplete one: only nurses already in the NNC could marry, and applications

from married nurses who wanted to join would continue to be rejected.

At the same time, both ANC and NNC, the Red Cross, the American Nurses Association, and others were running huge recruitment campaigns for nurses, telling the public that the shortage was dire. Some members of Congress understood that the shortage was more apparent than real, and they put pressure on the War Department, especially the Navy, to ease marital-status standards. They also strongly suggested that the military encourage women to enlist by ending its common practice of separating married couples by thousands of miles. Army nurse Lillie Emory Skinner, for example, served in the European Theater of Operations, while her husband, a dentist, was in the Pacific Theater—where there actually was far more need for Navy nurses. She told author Diane Burke Fessler that "my husband and I wrote letters all the time, and mail went between England and the Pacific theater pretty well."

Congress appeared to understand such people better than the War Department did. It also took the military some time to grasp the reality that women's military branches simply could not exercise the same sort of "selective service" that it did for men. Without the threat of a draft, women's services had a finite number of potential volunteers—and beyond personal willingness, many women who wished to volunteer simply could not because of family obligations. By the time that the Women Marines formed on January 28, 1943, the older women's military units were discovering that the initial rush of volunteers was over. The Marines, in fact, would take almost a year to fill the female quota that they thought they would complete in their first month.

As recruitment fell, so did some of the high standards, especially excessively rigid requirements on height and weight, superior eyesight, and so forth. The minimum age, however, continued to demand that female recruits be older than male ones. Although there was little discussion of this even among recruitment experts, the assumption probably was that parents trusted the military with their teenage boys, but with not their girls. A son's unsupervised behavior was simply not as worrisome as the possibility of a daughter getting into trouble.

Finally, the "enlistment standard" that was most inequitable and unjustifiable was that of race. Only the WAC (with a white Southerner, Oveta Culp Hobby, as its director) offered anything close to the same enlistment opportunities to African-American women. The Army Nurse Corps was second to open its ranks, but all of the Navy's units—the NNC, the WAVES, SPARS, and Marines—long had unstated exclusion policies. For most of the war, an African-American woman, no matter what her qualifications, could not meet their ostensible enlistment standards.

*See also:* **African-American women; American Nurses Association; Army Nurse Corps; draft; European Theater of Operations; Hobby, Oveta Culp; males, comparisons with; Marines, Women; McAfee, Mildred; Navy Nurse**

**Corps; nurses/nursing; Pacific Theater of Operations; recruitment; Red Cross; SPARS; Streeter, Ruth Cheney; WAVES; Women's Army Corps**

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## EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

The 19th Amendment, which ensured the right of all American women to vote in all elections, passed out of Congress by the required two-thirds majority of both houses on June 4, 1919; it was ratified by the necessary three-quarters of the state legislatures on August 26, 1920. With such overwhelming majorities of representative bodies, many people assumed that women were full citizens. That, however, was not the legal case.

One of the first rude awakenings came just a few years later. The 1922 Cable Act intended to equalize citizenship by gender, but the question of female citizenship nonetheless arose in 1928, when the man who lost his Florida congressional seat to Ruth Bryan Owen argued that she was not a citizen. Although she was born in Nebraska as the daughter of famed William Jennings Bryan, her opponent was technically correct when he said that she lost her citizenship when she married an Englishman during World War I. Even though her husband had died and even though the Cable Act should have taken care of the problem, there was a legalistic case that her citizenship had not been restored. Congress gave him a respectful hearing before deciding that Owen had won the election and should be seated.

The central point, however, was that a man never would have found himself in this circumstance. An American woman did, in fact, lose her citizenship when she married a foreign man in the past, while the situation was just the reverse for men: a man conveyed American citizenship to his foreign wife. It was one of many things that seemed to indicate a need for a constitutional amendment spelling out that men and women were equal in the eyes of the law.

In addition to federal law, state laws had an infinite variety of different treatment for women and men who were in

the same situation—some of which, such as the legal age for marriage, are still extant. Among the more egregious negations of the equality ideal was that a number of states barred women from acting as jurors: as late as 1961, when the U.S. Supreme Court struck down their laws, three states still did not permit women to serve on juries. In other states, the law gave any male automatically superior status to any female in a family as executors of estates. Many states excluded women from tax-supported, traditionally male colleges, while providing no equivalent opportunity for female students. For all these reasons and more, the Woman's Party, which had begun in the last years of the suffrage movement, introduced the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA) into Congress in 1923. Drafted by New Jersey's Alice Paul, it read:

Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.

Congress shall have the power, by appropriate legislation, to enforce the provisions of this article.

The second sentence had been used in several constitutional amendments, including the 19th that granted the vote, but it nevertheless raised the hackles of conservatives who detested the federal government and valued states rights over women's rights. Not all ERA opponents were right-wingers, however, as some of the most liberal people in America at that time also opposed it. They included such stellar feminists as First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt and Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins.

They and their progressive colleagues had spent their lives working for protective labor legislation to spare women from some of the era's free-enterprise harshness. The first maximum-hour laws, for example, were adopted explicitly to protect women who worked in laundries, where they not uncommonly were expected to work as many as eighteen hours on Saturdays. The liberals who worked for maximum-hour laws repeatedly had to go to court before the U.S. Supreme Court finally upheld such legislation. Progressives also worked for protective health-and-safety laws, such as allowing women who worked long summer days in canneries to have seats. In a few states, they successfully pushed for minimum-wage laws for women.

Although always well-intended, progressives sometimes pushed laws that arguably were too protective: state bans on night work by women, for example, may have had the effect of benefiting men more than women. The largely male union movement of the era sometimes supported protective labor laws less from genuine concern for working women than because they wanted to keep women out of the labor market. Moreover, when night work became a wartime necessity, states quickly repealed or simply ignored such laws.

A constitutional amendment that provided absolute equality between men and women, however, would make it unconstitutional to have laws that specifically protected women. ERA proponents argued that this issue could be easily addressed by extending the same laws to benefit men—but

women such as Perkins and Roosevelt, who had worked hard to get protective laws passed by legislatures and then upheld by courts, were not willing to risk those fragile victories. Because of these objections from both progressive women and labor unions, the ERA languished in Congress for decades. It did not get committee hearings, and few people even knew that it or the Woman's Party existed.

That party had been founded by Alice Paul and other women with Republican affiliations, and its history was a second factor in the failure of the ERA. Their campaign strategy for passing the 19th Amendment that granted the vote had earned them the permanent animosity of many Democratic women. They modeled it on the irrelevant British parliamentary system and opposed all Democrats—including those who supported suffrage—because the president was a Democrat. Even though the Constitution provides no role for presidents in the adoption of amendments, and even though President Woodrow Wilson finally did overcome his states-rights philosophy to endorse the amendment, the party continued to vilify him and Democrats generally. Leading Democratic women considered the Woman's Party strategy of opposing congressmen who supported suffrage to be absolutely daft; some even thought they actually were Republican stooges.

Republicans took control of both the White House and the Congress in the 1920s, and because the economy collapsed into the Great Depression at the end of that decade, fewer and fewer women saw the Woman's Party as viable. When the Roosevelt New Deal Democrats came to power in 1933, powerful insiders such as Molly Dewson were not predisposed to working with Alice Paul and her aging membership. Although the Woman's Party maintained a still-extant headquarters in a historic Capitol Hill house, it became increasingly without influence—and its women rarely bothered themselves to cross the street and actually talk with members of Congress.

It was not as though there were no congresswomen they could have lobbied, as women in both parties rose to powerful positions during the 1930s and 1940s. Democrat Mary T. Norton chaired the House Labor Committee, an important body during wartime labor shortages. When Republicans were in the majority before and after the war, there were powerful Republican women: Florence Kahn was a senior member of the Military Affairs Committee; Frances Bolton was the leader on nursing issues; Edith Nourse Rogers was the expert on the Women's Army Corps, while Margaret Chase Smith emulated that with the women's naval branches. All of these well-informed, conscientious women in both parties nonetheless opposed the Equal Rights Amendment.

Its only female supporters during the war years were Senator Hattie Caraway of Arkansas—who, after more than a decade in office, lost the 1944 election to a more liberal man—and Representative Jeannette Rankin, the only member of Congress who voted against the 1941 declaration of war, which meant that she had no chance of winning her 1942 reelection. Nor did Alice Paul's 1944 slight rewording of the amendment make any difference.

Opposing the ERA did not mean that congresswomen were unconcerned with women's issues. With Florida's Claude Pepper as one of the sponsors, they introduced an equal pay act to address the traditional disparity between men and women doing the same jobs. This was too radical, though, coming as it did soon after the depression, when jobs often were meted out as a kind of charity with men axiomatically considered to be the family breadwinner. Congress did not pass the Equal Pay Act until 1963, twenty years after the war's midpoint.

The Roosevelt administration exhibited more courage, as well as political astuteness: recognizing that Congress would not pass any sort of affirmative action, it proclaimed Executive Order 8802 already in June of 1941, six months prior to U.S. entrance in the war. The order banned discrimination in civil service jobs, and a second 1943 order extended the anti-discriminatory language to defense industries that had federal contracts. Both executive orders, however, addressed job discrimination based on race more than on gender, and thus primarily benefited African-American women.

Near the end of the war, *Life* offered an unusual piece that defined, at least to their editorial minds, the difference between supporting general feminist goals and supporting the Equal Rights Amendment. "Let us face the fact," it began:

that the status of women in America, which was changing fast enough before the war, is changing with lightening speed during it ... Women hold increasingly important committee jobs in Congress. Mrs. Roosevelt is a more active politician than any other First Lady in our history. More women than men voted in the last [1944] election. Both party platforms endorsed a constitutional amendment giving "Equal Rights" to women; and while nothing will be done about this amendment because it is largely nonsense, it would have been foolhardy of either party to say ...

Both major parties did continue to keep the ERA in their platforms—but without the expectation of actually trying to pass it—throughout the next decades. In the 1970s, after Vice President Spiro Agnew and President Richard Nixon were forced to resign because of separate scandals, the ERA became a major issue in the 1976 election. When the non-elected incumbent, Republican Gerald Ford, was challenged by Democrat Jimmy Carter, both Rosalyn Carter and Betty Ford visibly supported the ERA.

The revived women's movement succeeded in getting both houses of Congress to pass the ERA by the necessary two-thirds majority in 1972; distant Hawaii (which was not a state when the 19th Amendment was ratified) approved it just hours later. Thirty of the necessary thirty-eight states ratified prior to the end of 1973, but then the amendment lagged as conservative Republicans organized against it. In 1977, Indiana became the 35th and last state to approve it before the seven-year ratification period expired. Congress extended the deadline, but Republicans removed their previous endorsement in their 1980 platform, and with that year's election of Republican Ronald Reagan, the ERA's negative fate was sealed.



The strongest argument against it in the 1970s was that the ERA would require Congress to draft women equally with men—a point that almost no one made during World War II. In fact, with both the 1942 Austin-Wadsworth Bill that would have drafted women for industrial jobs and especially the 1945 Nurses Selective Service Act, Congress assumed that it could draft women. It was the most conservative members of the wartime Congress, in fact, who pushed hardest for these bills to draft women—in contrast to their ideological heirs of the 1970s, who proclaimed their unwillingness to adopt the ERA because they wanted to protect women from the draft. The old protective labor law issue rarely was mentioned, and most debate centered on the draft and the ongoing war. The key difference, of course, was the nature of the two wars: Americans almost unanimously supported World War II, while that was far from the case with the Vietnam War of the 1970s.

Almost a century after Alice Paul drafted the Equal Rights Amendment, some women still make occasional attempts to revive it—but most of the legal changes that it would have implemented have occurred without it. The debate it stirred in the 1970s caused a huge attitudinal transformation, which resulted in the rewriting of many discriminatory state laws. Like the proposed constitutional amendment to ban child labor, which had a parallel existence during the first half of the twentieth century and also never was adopted, a big factor in the ERA's defeat was the strength of the argument that it no longer was needed. Feminists were winning the war for equality without winning this particular battle.

*See also:* **Austin-Wadsworth Bill; Bolton, Frances; Caraway, Hattie; Dewson, Molly; draft; Kahn, Florence; Norton, Mary T.; Nurses Selective Service Bill; pay; Perkins, Frances; Rogers, Edith Nourse; Roosevelt, Eleanor; Smith, Margaret Chase**

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## EUROPEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS (ETO)

The Allies defined a half-dozen "theaters of operations" during World War II, but in the minds of most Americans, the world was divided into just two, the European Theater of Operations (ETO) and the Pacific Theater of Operations (PTO). Because Japan had begun the war with the United States by striking Hawaii's Pearl Harbor, many wanted to seek immediate revenge by concentrating on the PTO. This was understandable, but because the Pacific fleet had been devastated at Pearl Harbor, large-scale action on that front had to wait until replacement ships, aircraft carriers, etc. could be built. Instead, U.S. General Douglas MacArthur retreated to Australia early in 1942, leaving members of the Army Nurse Corps and other women in Manila as prisoners of war. Like the much more numerous men, these women felt abandoned; their sacrifices in horrific warfare at Bataan and Corregidor seemed in vain.

But simultaneously with the Pearl Harbor attack, Japan's allies, Germany and Italy, declared war on the U.S. Congress then declared war on them, and the European front also became vital. Many Americans, especially on the East Coast, reasonably feared that German planes would attack there, and, in fact, numerous submarines were sunk near U.S. shores. Because Germany had been sinking British ships and mercilessly bombing British civilians for over a year, organizations such as the American Women's Voluntary Services expected to have to emulate the civil defense work that British women did. Other prescient women had begun warning Americans about the dangers of European fascism long before the global war erupted. Two of the strongest voices in the print media were Sigrid Schultz of the *Chicago Tribune* and Dorothy Thompson, the wartime editor of *Ladies Home Journal*; years earlier, she was one of the first reporters to interview Nazi leader Adolf Hitler.

Some American women helped the British in their fight against the Nazis since the European war began. Mary Lee Settle of Virginia, for example, was a lonely volunteer in the ground forces of Britain's Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF). Although she strongly believed in the democratic cause, her memoir of this experience is so pervasively sad that it becomes painful to read. She was traumatized when, in a dark fog, an airplane's whirling propeller decapitated a careless mechanic and sent his head flying at her.

Other women volunteered with friends and felt more camaraderie. About two dozen female American aviators joined the British Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA) while the United States was still neutral, and some flew planes from Canada to England. Pauline Gower remembered her London arrival early in 1940:

I began to worry ... the Minister for Air. I kept at it until, finally, we were accepted into the ATA—myself and eight others. We were, quite frankly, unpopular at the start, and we had considerable prejudice to break down ...

We spent the whole of that first winter—and it was one



The war coincided with exceptionally cold winters in Europe, but like this Army nurse and Red Cross worker in Belgium, women lived in tents and used latrines, not toilets. *Courtesy of Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

of the most bitter on record—ferrying Tiger Moths all over the country. We could not have had a more severe test. Tiger Moths have open cockpits ... None of us will ever forget the pain of thawing out after flights....

From Tiger Moths we were promoted to ... Miles Masters and Oxfords, but we were sternly precluded from flying all operation types of aircraft. We ... plugged away at our job ... By June, 1942, we were allowed to ferry Hurricanes and Spitfires and by the beginning of 1942, we were flying ... bombers.

Red Cross women were especially likely to work in Europe before the U.S. entry into the war. Seventeen American nurses employed by the Red Cross were on the *Maasdam*, a Dutch ship, when Germans torpedoed it in June 1941. A few days later, a second vessel was hit; this time, seven nurses and their chaperone sank with the ship. Others survived—barely—on lifeboats. In the worst case, two young women from New York and New Jersey lived on a rubber raft in the North Atlantic for nineteen days, caring for injured and frostbitten sailors. Two Englishmen died, and the others were semi-conscious when rescuers finally found them. Similarly committed women worked in England for many months

before the U.S. entered the war. “The night the news of the Jap attack at Pearl Harbor came in,” said one:

we went over to the recreation hall and curled up on the floor to listen to the radio. At two o’clock in the morning, we heard the President’s speech. Afterward, when the short wave [radio] brought us “The Star Spangled Banner,” we all stood up. We felt so full of emotion we had to gulp and blink our eyes to keep it from spilling out.

Six months later, about half of those nurses had traded their Red Cross uniforms for those of the Army Nurse Corps and were bound for North Africa, which became the first major front for U.S. troops. By then, all of continental Europe either had been occupied or neutralized by German Nazis under Hitler or by Italy’s Benito Mussolini and his Fascist Party. Mussolini had attacked Ethiopia already in 1936, and after the war formally began, German troops also went south to displace the British from their historic role in Egypt. France fell to the Nazis in 1940, and the fascists also aimed to take over its colonies in North Africa.

When American troops poured out of their ships onto the Algerian beachheads of Oran and Arzew in November 1942, some two hundred nurses went with them. These women waded ashore, bullets and bombs exploding around them, and immediately set up their life-saving hospitals. North Africa, too, would be the first overseas assignment for the Women’s Army Corps (WAC), and when it was won, both groups of women would move into the European Theater from Tunisia via Sicily. According to authors Litoff and Smith, ANC member June Wandrey wrote her Minneosta family from “Scorching Sicily” in July 1943:

My stockingless legs are scratched to shreds. About two hundred yards from my vantage point on the hillside, the hospital tents are going up in a race against darkness ... At the head of my cot, I have one piece of hand luggage, on top of that are my two field packs. For a pillow, I have a parachute seat ...

The moon should be up soon, it has been so gorgeous the past few nights, but it gives the enemy too much help. I prefer the real dark, dark nights.

A month later, she datelined her letter “Poor Sicily” and began simply, “Working like slaves. Too tired to write.” But she wrote on, including telling of the emotional drain of losing young men after hours of surgery. She added that she always told them they were doing fine, even when they were not. Nurses, she said, usually went off and shed tears in private, but she had seen doctors who “collapsed across the patient, broke down, and cried.”

From Sicily, it would be a long and miserable slough up the Italian peninsula. Begun in July 1943, it would not be truly over until the European war was, in April 1945. Even after Mussolini retreated north and German troops left southern Italy, there still would be patches of fascist resistance—and because Italian partisans also fought each other, no one could feel safe from unidentified enemies. Army nurses nonetheless landed at Anzio just five days after fierce fighting began

there, and June Wandrey was one of the women who worked under fire. She wrote resignedly in May 1944:

We are restricted to the immediate hospital area as it isn't safe to leave. There is nothing to write about but the wounded. We live down in the ground in sand-bagged damp, smelly foxholes, like moles in a blackout. Each hole is big enough to accommodate one army cot. It is timbered and sandbagged on three sides and the top. It's cozy, confining, and for this area I'm happy to be underground ... The ward tents are also dug down into the ground ... The huge Red Crosses are supposed to be protection, but the enemy doesn't always observe that convention. The tent mate I had in Sicily ... was wounded in the leg here at Anzio.

Nor did the bombed-out cities above ground offer things to which Americans were accustomed. ANC member Helen McKee wrote, also in the Litoff/Smith collection, that she learned to utilize "each little scrap" in her Naples hospital. "We have no CO2 for our machines, no soda-lime, no pins, either straight pins or safety pins, and paper is so scarce ..." On the other hand, McKee was one of the first to use "Penicillium," a new drug flown in from England and "not yet available in the U.S."

These American women in Italy got little attention back home, partly because they were simply overlooked in the hugely larger number of men, but also because the military was uncertain how Americans would respond to the fact that women were so close to combat. WAC authorities especially feared that widespread public knowledge might harm recruitment and did not publicize the women who worked as radio operators, cryptographers, and more on the Italian front. Reporter Doris Fleson, for example, was astonished when she accidentally encountered American women near Naples: "I can see scores of them," she wrote from her tent late in 1943, "clad in soldiers' pants, clumping through the soggy Italian loam in G.I. shoes, busy, tired, intent."

Several months later, the Surgeon General took time to laud the ANC women in Italy. He singled out an Iowa first lieutenant, whose Atlantic convoy was attacked by submarines several times; she served through bloody battles in Tunisia and landed with the infantry in Sicily, pushed up through Palermo and was bound for the Italian mainland when her ship was bombed. "Wet and bedraggled, wearing nothing but pajamas and tennis shoes," she got herself ashore and immediately set up a nursing facility. *American Magazine's* report of his speech continued with a profile of another nurse, who had been through action so severe that some of her colleagues believed she showed signs of combat fatigue. Yet when Germans bombed the plainly marked hospital, killing three other nurses and leaving her as the ranking officer, she immediately took command and restored order.

He completed the ceremony by citing a third nurse, a Maine woman who had injured her back when the ship she was on lurched in a storm. She didn't tell anyone, and when they arrived at their Italian landing, she and other women made the expected jump into water over their heads, with a fifty-five-pound pack on her sore back. She worked until her



WACs work with their British peers at a typically crowded ETO office in France, 1944. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

spinal cord refused to be pushed anymore and paralyzed her leg. "There was no fear in the eyes of any of these women," the chief of the Medical Corps said. "They have conducted themselves as coolly as the most hardened veterans." *Collier's* correspondent Martha Gellhorn also wrote graphically of the Italian scene:

A group of English tankists, drinking tea outside a smashed house on the Monte Lura, invite you into their mansion, which is mainly fallen beams and the rubble of masonry. The place stinks because of two dead oxen ... A Canadian soldier lies dead on another roadside, with a coat spread lovingly over him. There ... [is] a welter of German paper, for apparently the Germans also are the slaves of paper. Amongst this paper is a postcard with a baby's picture on it ... A young Italian woman, wrapped in a blanket, sits on the doorstep of a poor little hovel that one of our shells hit during the night; this was in a town the Germans held until a few hours ago. She wakes up and starts to laugh, charming, gay and absolutely mad.

As the Allies slowly pushed the Germans out of Italy, far greater numbers of American women were assembling in Britain. So many people and so much materiel accumulated there prior to the invasion of occupied France that some jokingly said southern England would sink under the weight. Among them were African-American women in the Army Nurse Corps, who arrived late in 1943. They lived in segregated housing and treated either black patients or prisoners of war, but most spoke favorably of their experience, generally finding less racism in the ETO than at home. Theresa James, who made a career of the army, told author Diane Burke Fessler that "during my first trip to London, Harrod's Department Store was bombed," but James—like most American





African-American women in the 6888th Postal Unit march as somber Europeans watch at the war's end. *Courtesy of National Archives*

women—nonetheless took the opportunity to visit other parts of Britain during the two years she was there.

By D-Day, June 6, 1944, appreciably more than a million Americans were in England. Among them were WACs, the first of whom arrived via Scotland in the spring of 1943. Ruth Cowan and Iris Carpenter were two of the female war correspondents who covered their landing. Cowan wrote for the Associated Press while Carpenter broadcasted this news on BBC radio. According to author Julia Edwards, Carpenter “never forgot how the silk stockings of the American women shone in the sunlight as they marched on parade. The British had run out of silk stockings years ago.”

As soon as they landed, said a *Saturday Evening Post* article, these women were “doing a thousand and one different jobs.”

Wacs ... interpret combat films to determine the success of our bombing missions, they make maps, struggle with codes and ciphers and do prisoner-of-war work. Wacs are photographers, radio mechanics, mess sergeants and cooks ... Wacs plot the missions of Allied as well as hostile aircraft in the secret plotting rooms ...

Recently, they've had to plot the precise course of incoming flying bombs, and it is a weird spectacle to see a Wac corporal stand calmly by the plotting table, pushing the small gadget which represents a bomb. When the siren has sounded, the bomb itself is droning overhead and every nonessential G.I. has scrambled for cover. Incidentally, four Wacs were recently awarded the Purple Heart for injuries received in a robot-bomb explosion.

Even on days when bombs did not fall, English life was not nearly so glamorous as it might sound to those back home. Many women were billeted in historic manor houses and castles, but this was not so nice as one might assume. Instead, a servant-less life in such a place was likely to be inconvenient and cold, as ancient building lacked the running hot water and furnaces that most Americans took for granted.

Some WACs lived in London apartments, or “flats,” but others, according to *Time*, were quartered in quickly-built “huts heated by a single stove.” Major Charity Adams Earley, the top African-American WAC in Europe, said of her arrival in Scotland with a colleague:

I may have been in colder weather at other times, but I suffered from the cold that night more than at any other time in my life. Noel and I concluded that this Red Cross building had not had any heat in it since it was built. Our room ... was heated with a small gas grate that functioned only when fed coins (shillings), which we did all night. I think we managed to keep the temperature at about freezing ... We slept in our clothing, including overcoats.

Blackouts were strictly enforced all over the island, which meant no light of any sort that might be seen by a night plane, and in England's short winter days, it was almost inevitable that WACs would have to feel their way in the unfamiliar landscape as they walked or biked to and from duty. Rain and fog added another unpleasant element. Nor could a WAC expect a hearty meal at journey's end. The British imposed rationing on themselves years earlier so that supplies would be allotted fairly—but there simply was little tasty food available on a small island surrounded by hostile submarines that attacked incoming ships.

It was hard for Britons to share their limited resources with the hordes of Allies who came, but some nonetheless were so grateful for this “invasion of angels”—as a *Rotarian* article called the WACs—that they made great sacrifices to show their thanks. Grace Porter Miller told of a retired teacher who felt sorry for “these poor young American girls so far from home” at Christmas and invited them for dinner. It ended with “a real cake, which must have used up half a year's ration of sugar.” Another of Miller's happy recollections was in one of the few cases in which British life was superior to American. “The train from London to Edinburgh amazed us,” she wrote. “It was fast,

it was smooth, it was on time, it was comfortable—and it even had movie screens at the front of each car.”

Although “the blitz,” when German planes dropped bombs night after night, was over by the time that WACs arrived, occasional German bombers still sneaked past British fighter planes. Red Cross worker Betty B. John spent much of the war in England, even though her army officer husband was stationed stateside. Her letter to him in the Litoff/Smith collection told of being in a southern coastal beach town, walking in the 1943 May sunshine, when:

with not more than two minutes warning Jerry [Germany] was upon us. We threw ourselves flat into an embankment at the roadside as he passed over ... spreading havoc as he went. I counted 20 planes ... I did watch after they'd passed over, the bombing of the town—horrible. Then back over us again and with their machine guns, then out to sea ... Two days later, they were still getting bodies out of buildings.

Grace Porter Miller was in London during both conventional bombing and when the first guided missiles, called V-1 rockets or “buzz bombs,” began. She described British calm in dealing with daily disaster, saying that she and a friend were dining at the Ritz:

Very proper English ladies and gentlemen were enjoying a spot of tea ... We all became aware of the ticking of a buzz bomb coming closer and closer ... There was absolute silence for ten seconds. Then we heard the bomb detonate a short distance away ... Conversations continued on from mid-sentence.

Miller and her friends then dealt with “the ticklish problem” of whether or not to tell the Tennessee wife of a colleague exactly how he was killed: he had been with an Englishwoman when a bomb fell on their bed. Red Cross worker Gysella Simon also described buzz bombs. According to Litoff/Smith, she replied to her family’s inquiries from “somewhere in England” on September 1, 1944: “We know only too well what they are,” she said of the rockets, “and see them every day. The agonizing moment comes when the motor cuts out and it starts to glide down. You never know where it will hit ... Since 7 AM this morning we’ve had 8 alarms.” Other dangers included even kidnapping plots. Nurses at a hospital near Swidon were the target of nearby German prisoners of war, who intended to take these women as hostages until guards foiled their plan.

Many nurses, especially those in the Navy Nurse Corps, served in Britain throughout the war, and six months prior to D-Day, Martha Gellhorn wrote of hospitals and make-shift hospitals already were filling. “The ward is a long, wide, cold room,” she said of one:

There are yellow and mauve potted chrysanthemums on tables down the center of the room, and a black iron coal stove at either end ... But [in] this ward ... no one has a real face and many of them have hands that are not much good ... Around the stove there are now four young men gossiping together. One ... is an American from Columbus, Ohio, and he crashed ... His face, they say, was simply pushed two inches back inside his head.

Hundreds of thousands more casualties would arrive at British hospitals after the June 6, 1944, invasion to liberate France. Again, ANC women again led the way. On D-Day plus four, they waded ashore in Normandy and slept that night on the hard-won beach. So close to the front that they sometimes had to help bury the battle dead before they could set up their tented hospitals, these women repeated the experience of their sisters in Africa and Italy—only in a much wetter, colder, and more miserable environment.

Army nurse Grace Peterson told Fessler that she never would forget “getting up in the night during heavy rains and having a river of water running through the middle of the [tent] floor.” The same author also recounted the experience of army nurse Ethel Carlson Cerasale as “Patton’s troops raced across northern Europe.” Her job was to stabilize men enough for the trip back to England, and some, she said, were so badly injured that they were in “full body casts with only a hole for breathing and one for a straw or a cigarette.”

Lee Carson, a reporter for the International News Service, violated censorship rules to cover D-Day as it happened. She simply asked a “commander at an air base who was happy to help her get a seat aboard a plane and an aerial view of the attack.” Author Julia Edwards credits Carson with “an exclusive eyewitness report of the invasion.” When the ANC landed in Normandy, Iris Carpenter was on “the first ambulance plane.” Carpenter was British but affiliated herself with American news organizations, especially the *Boston Globe*, because ETO commander Dwight D. Eisenhower offered women more opportunity than did the British military.

Women employed by the Red Cross as canteen workers also soon arrived, and some would follow the armies from there all the way to Czechoslovakia. Although many people thought their jobs frivolous, that was far from the reality in the ETO. These women lived in tents and memorized daily passwords to reenter tent cities after they took their “clubmobiles” out to open-air messes every day. They provided two American samples—hot coffee and hot doughnuts—to soldiers, who often were as hungry for female companionship as for food. But there was little time to chat, as the grease from doughnut-fryers had to be cleaned; new batches of dough mixed and cut and fried; coffee grounds emptied and fresh pots brewed. In many locales, this had to be done without running water, and hot water always had to be heated sans water-heater. Nor did the clubmobiles have any toilet facilities; women used their helmets.

After tough battles in northern France, the Germans retreated from Paris on August 25, 1944. Female reporters raced male ones to first file the story of the great city’s liberation from four years of Nazi occupation. Daring Lee Carson repeated her D-Day exclusive: when she slipped away from the military’s press authorities in northern France for two weeks, they ordered her arrest, but on Liberation Day, she turned up. According to Edwards, Carson had “rolled through the St.-Cloud gate into Paris the evening of August 24, behind the tanks but before the Germans had checked out.” Sonia Tomara of the *New York Herald Tribune* “arrived

on a weapons carrier,” while the AP’s Ruth Cowan came “under fire” on the first train. Iris Carpenter broadcast the news without being able to hear herself speak because of the shouting of jubilant Parisians.

Twenty-three-year old Alice Niestockel, a Red Cross canteen worker, was fortunate enough to be there, and she told author Olga Gruhzt-Hoyt:

The crowds were crazy. They were happy, they were screaming, and they were kissing the GIs ... They were liberated! They waved bottles of wine in the air ... One old Frenchman came up to me, commented on my uniform, and asked what I did. I said that I served a thousand to two thousand men a week. *Mon dieu, les Americains!* he said, shocked. Because of the language difficulties he really believed I was a lady of the evening.

But their laughter did not last long, as Niestockel and her colleague spent just one day in Paris before moving on to Liege, where they were billeted in an unheated monastery. As fall turned into winter, Niestockel sought out long underwear and parachute boots, which she wore while dancing in the snow with soldiers, to a record player that she carried in her doughnut-making clubmobile. The monks in the monastery recovered sufficiently from the shock of having women in their midst that they occasionally brought them little gifts, including fresh eggs—something that the records of several women indicate was the most valued trading item in the ETO.

Gertrude Pearson Casetta was one of five hundred WACs who arrived in England just a month before D-Day and went on to France in August. The Normandy beaches still appeared chaotic, and the officer in charge told the women “to find a foxhole in the field above the beach and bivouac there for the night.” Casetta told Olga Gruhzt-Hoyt that her cryptographic WAC unit was assigned to several moving stations before finally settling in rude quarters at Vittel in far eastern France, near the Argonne forest. There:

Bunks were confiscated German military beds with wooden slats, no mattresses. The stove in each room in the small house ... was also German—and inefficient. Wood was scarce and had to be dug out from under deep snow. Kerosene for lamps..., helmets [for] bathtubs ...

The overworked nurses asked for WAC volunteers ... The fact that I could walk into a wardroom filled with soldiers and barely hear a murmur left a lasting impression ... I shall never forget the white bed linens and their pale faces, almost as white, and the silence in those rooms.

Christmas of 1944 was stark. The Allies lost ground to Germans in what was called the Battle of the Bulge, as the enemy stretched Allied lines in a “bulge” back towards France. Dr. Austin R. Grant was one of the few female physicians permitted to serve overseas; eventually, she would travel with the Third Army all the way to Germany via Luxembourg, Belgium, and Holland. According to Fessler, Dr. Grant was in France when she joined other volunteers to assist at a Belgian hospital siege during the Battle of the Bulge. “We got as far as Malmedy,” she said, where the group “found everyone was retreating because the Germans were coming

up the hill ... I later heard the doctors who were still operating were captured.”

Army nurse Virginia Grabowski Shannon, who was stationed east of Lyon, said that “on Christmas Eve 1944, I was in my bunk when we were bombed. One girl went crazy ...” On Christmas Day 1944, Nazi troops made their last stand at the beleaguered Belgian town of Bastogne, and four women reported this for the American media. They were Lee Carson and Iris Carpenter, as well as Catherine Coyne of the *Boston Herald* and Dot Avery of the *Detroit Free Press*. Author Nancy Caldwell Sorel quoted Avery’s report, in which this former society writer unintentionally revealed that repeated battle scenes had jaded her:

How we got here and what we saw on the way ... doesn’t enter into this story ... The town is still burning from German bombing. There are the usual scenes of wreckage and desolation. Civilians are digging themselves out, picking up bits of junk and trying to salvage their homes. In a pile of rubble which had been an improvised hospital before bombs hit it, German prisoners and medical corpsmen are searching for bodies.

Added to their pain was the fact that the winter of 1944–45 was extraordinary frigid. Nurse anesthetist Janet Haddon Hoffman told Fessler that even though she lived in Minnesota, she had never felt so frozen. “We were always cold,” she said, “so five of us shared two or three blankets, sleeping together for warmth.” Vi Nelson Jones added that “we had to scrounge around to find wood” for the pot-bellied stove in their tent, and that she traded her monthly liquor ration to soldiers, “one jigger at a time, to chop my wood.”

Nor did nurses have time to “scrounge around for wood.” Virginia Grabowski Shannon said that “it was nothing for us to evacuate two hundred to three hundred patients, and get three hundred to four hundred right on top of that during the Battle of the Bulge.” Like others, she often did work ordinarily done by a doctor, including stitching wounds and handling blood transfusions. Many women worked eighteen-hour days and caught only a bit of sleep before returning to bloody operating rooms and ghostly silent wards.

The Allied forces ground on, and the “bulge” began to close early in 1945, at the same time that the first unit of African-American WACs arrived in the ETO. Their ship also evaded German vessels by arriving via Scotland, where a brass band greeted the 687 women and 26 officers on February 10. The 6888th Postal Unit in which they served set records for speed at sorting mail, working first in Birmingham and then in Paris. They were there to march through the Arc d’Triomphe at the war’s end.

Still there was much costly ground to win in central Europe, and as German armies collapsed, nurses had to deal more often with one of the most disturbing aspects of their work. Even decades after the war was over, nurses from all fronts expressed ambivalence about their obligation to treat prisoners of war. In the ETO, little was said negatively about Italian prisoners, but Germans, even young ones, proved difficult for most women. In a Cherbourg hospital, June



Norlin cared for some of the most egregiously indoctrinated members of Hitler Youth, who believed Nazi propaganda that they were winning; they even insisted to her that Chicago had been bombed. Although most women had no trouble following military policy that they not socialize with prisoners, Vi Nelson Jones was an exception. She dated a German captain, who had such skill as a tailor that he even made her a stylish swimsuit.

Communication was even more complicated for women who treated civilian refugees, people who were outside of the military structures and at a loss for resources. Language alone was a huge barrier. Few Europeans at that time understood more than their native tongue, and at hospitals in central France, it was not unusual to encounter people who spoke difficult languages such as Hungarian or Latvian. The Red Cross employed translators and refugee workers, but in the first emergency, nurses had to depend on other patients for translation. Vi Nelson Jones, for example, was from New Mexico and spoke some Spanish, and “so,” she said, “I talked to a Spanish man, who would talk to an Italian, and he would try to talk to the Roumanian, and we just hoped the message got through somehow.”

Most Red Cross women in the ETO saw their chief objective as maintaining the morale of soldiers, but their own morale also could be worn down by the war. As Alice Niestockel followed the First Army into eastern France’s Chambois, for instance, she was profoundly affected by the “dead Germans stacked, awaiting burial.” Emotional pain became physical for her, and according to Gruhzit-Hoyt, every time Niestockel “ate or drank something, she felt she was smelling the scent of death.” Violet Kochendoerfer, another Red Cross worker, also wrote poignantly of starving refugees she found when Allied armies crossed German borders. Often such scenarios were complicated by local and personal histories of which Americans were unaware, and again it was difficult to tell friend from foe. ANC member Esther Edwards explained to Fessler of late 1944:

The local people in Strasbourg were French citizens but spoke German, and there were many German sympathizers who were barely civil to us Americans. The Americans took over the home of a German who had refused to return to Germany, and one night I went there with some other officers ... They served us in their living room, and we listened to their radio. A few days later ... the local people threatened them, and they hang themselves.

The numbers of refugees also increased as the Allies moved closer and closer towards the final quest, the capture of Hitler’s Berlin. Pitifully broken old women, often with a grandchild or two, pushed carts laden with all they possessed in the world, slowly headed to uncertain destinations. Female correspondents were especially likely to emphasize and to pause in the great violence to capture such personal stories. Even Anne O’ Hare McCormick, a journalistic veteran who already in 1936 was the first woman on the *New York Times* editorial board, wrote such a piece. “The Woman with a Broom” unforgettably portrayed an

anonymous woman trying to clean up the rubble that her home had become.

While British and American troops fought their way east in Germany, their Soviet allies pushed from the opposite direction. The war had been infinitely worse for Russians than for Americans, with millions of deaths and especially profound suffering during the long siege of Stalingrad. They were eager for revenge against Hitler—and many more refugees crowded roads as Germans tried to escape towards Allied troops instead of allowing Russians to capture them. As winter turned to spring, the empire that Hitler predicted would last a thousand years began to collapse. U.S. troops crossed the Rhine into Germany on March 23; Mannheim and Frankfurt fell soon after; and Dusseldorf, a vital industrial city, surrendered on April 17. Important news accumulated so quickly that it was difficult to keep up with it, but several women did. When the two allied fronts first met at the town of Torgau, south of Berlin, among those who were there to write about the beginning of the end was Ann Stringer of the United Press syndicate. According to Sorel, she began this historic story with:

Down the streets of Torgau came a Russian youth wearing blue shorts and a gray cap with a red hammer and sickle on it. “Bravo, Americanski!” he yelled. “Bravo comrades!” He was dripping wet because he had swum the Elbe River to greet us ... We gave the Russians our autographs. They gave us theirs. The commander invited us to lunch. He said I was the first American woman he and his troops had ever seen, and he seated me in the place of honor on his right.

That was on April 25, and to their west, fascism continued to fall. On the 28th, Italians killed their former dictator Mussolini and his mistress, Clara Petacci; two days later, Hitler and his mistress, Eva Braun, killed themselves; and the remnants of his Nazi government signed an unconditional surrender on May 7, 1945. The ETO portion of the war was over, but VE Day (Victory in Europe) was more celebrated in the United States than there. The unmitigated tragedy was too apparent for joy there, and more pain followed as the shocking revelations of the Holocaust were uncovered.

Again, women led in the truth telling. *Life*’s famed Margaret Bourke-White became an icon of photojournalism by insisting that the evidence of Hitler’s death camps be published, even though the gruesome pictures violated longtime “gentlemen’s agreements” about obscuring the horrors of war. Young Marguerite Higgins, who would go to win a 1952 Pulitzer Prize winner for the *New York Herald-Tribune*, was among other women who reported this appalling chapter in Western history.

Some American women stayed on to enforce peace in the ETO. Among them was WAC Pauline Abell. Her husband, a professional army man, had died in the PTO, and she had no reason to return to the United States. Instead, she was eager to continue her interesting work with the formerly secret United States Group Control Council for Germany. She shared a house with two other WAC officers and so much wanted to develop a new career that she enrolled in classes

to learn Russian. An article in the *New York Times Magazine* said that Abell "wants to get to know more Russian girls and men as she has ... British and French girls, for she sincerely believes ... [in] understanding one another."

*See also:* **Adams, Charity; African-American women; American Women's Voluntary Services; Army Nurse Corps; Bataan; Bourke-White, Margaret; British women; censorship; cigarettes; Civil Defense; Corregidor; correspondents, war; D-Day; decorations, military; enemy aliens; Gellhorn, Martha; Higgins, Marguerite; Kirkpatrick, Helen; Maasdam; Navy Nurse Corps; North Africa; nurses/nursing; occupied Germany; Pacific Theater of Operations; Pearl Harbor; physicians; postwar; prisoners of war; rationing; Red Cross; refugees; travel; Thompson, Dorothy; V-E Day; Women's Army Corps**

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## FATALITIES

Americans deaths in World War I were very small compared with the sufferings of others. Historians estimate that about 50 million people worldwide died because of the war and its immediate aftermath—more than half of them civilians. American fatalities were much lower: of some 16 million men who served in the wartime military, about 292,000 died. Russia, an American ally, lost by far the most, with estimates as high as 39 million people, more than half of them civilians. Among Soviet soldiers there was approximately 1 death for every 22 people in the population (compared with 450 in the U.S. population). In this context, the United States did not suffer significantly—but every death matters.

Proportionately, the women who volunteered for the semi-official Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) endured by far the most fatalities. The WASP accepted somewhat fewer than two thousand women—and of those, thirty-eight died in performance of their duties. Given that the WASP existed for just seventeen months, that means a fatality about every eleven days. As a percentage, it is comparable to the fatality ratio for men: 1.8 percent of men in the armed forces died, while 1.9 percent of WASPs gave their lives. WASP fatalities, however, rarely were acknowledged. They received no posthumous military decorations, and their families got no death benefits.

Nor were these fatalities caused by female incompetence: accident reports repeatedly showed that male aviators took more chances than WASPs and caused proportionately more plane crashes. Indeed, in more than one case of a WASP fatality, she was co-piloting with a man who was showing off. That charge never was made against a WASP: their deaths were not due to false brave or recklessness, but to mechanical and weather problems. One fatality may have

been murder, as Anne Noggle told of a fatal WASP crash caused by sugar in the plane's gas tank.

The Army Nurse Corps (ANC) was the second-most dangerous corps for women, with 215 fatalities of its approximately 60,000 members. Sixteen of those deaths were particularly tragic because the women were killed by enemy fire, usually while working in hospitals that were clearly marked with the internationally recognized symbol of the Red Cross. Other major causes of ANC deaths were plane crashes (32), vehicle accidents, and illnesses—often caused by harsh conditions in which they literally worked themselves to death.

Most deaths occurred singly, but six ANC women died on the Anzio beachhead, during fierce fighting as the Allies chased the Germans out of Italy in February 1944. Their deaths became somewhat controversial, and ANC historian Edith Aynes said that when information was declassified after V-E Day, Brigadier General Joseph I. Martin explained his decision not to evacuate the women:

Had the nurses been removed, the act would have betrayed to the combat troops the gravity of their own plight. Nurses certainly *are not* expendable, but in a situation as critical as that which developed on the beachhead—when subjective factors determined whether a line would hold or crack—these nurses assumed a major symbolic importance.

Frances Slinger, an ANC member who was one of the first to arrive in France after D-Day, was killed by an exploding shell in Belgium in October 1944. She was one of several ANC women posthumously honored by having a ship named for her. Two other ANC women were seriously wounded in the barrage of enemy artillery, but survived. Perhaps the ETO's worst non-fatal ordeal for ANC women was when



## FATALITIES

thirteen nurses were trapped behind enemy lines in Albania during the winter of 1943–1944. They nearly starved, and that there were no fatalities is partly due to the care rendered by senior nurse Agnes Jensen, who later wrote the dramatic story of their escape.

Women of the Navy Nurse Corps (NNC) served on hospital ships surrounded by convoys of protectors and were in less danger than Army Nurse Corps women, but the NNC also had losses. According to author Susan Godson, nine died on overseas duty, while thirty-one NNC members died in the United States during the war. The *USS Comfort*, ironically, was the name of the ship on which six NNC women were killed in the Pacific. Another five became prisoners of war on Guam, while eight NNC members joined the much larger group of civilian and ANC women who were imprisoned after the fall of Bataan.

The Navy did not allow its non-nursing corps—the approximately 113,000 women of WAVES, SPARS, and Women Marines—to go overseas, but they nonetheless suffered 88 fatalities from accidents and illnesses within the United States. Two Marines died when a fire broke out at their training center on Parris Island, South Carolina.

Members of the similarly-sized Women's Army Corps (WAC) did serve overseas, and although they were not assigned to military occupational specialties (MOS) that involved combat, 186 died—a few while breaking regulations to go beyond the limited sphere of the WAC. Emma Jane Burrows Windham, for example, had flown since age twelve and studied aeronautical engineering at the University of California; she ferried bombers to Alaska and trained both male and female pilots. She joined the WAC in 1943 because, unlike any other female non-nursing branch, it permitted her to go overseas; she went to England and earned a Purple Heart during 1944 buzz bombing there. Colonel Mary C. Lave said that Windham remained a lowly private first class, but nonetheless held the MOS of “flight engineer” when she was killed. Probably because her male peers valued her skills more than War Department rule-makers, she was one of a three-member crew on a B-17, a bomber, when a C-47, a much bigger cargo plane, collided over Hertfordshire, England, on March 31, 1945.

Eleanor Campbell Nate had been the first corps member to die; killed at Christmas of 1942, she was on leave and with her husband, an Army major, when his plane crashed over the Gulf of Mexico. The first overseas fatality was Gladys I. Marson; she was killed in an Algerian jeep accident on June 5, 1943, six months after WACs arrived in North Africa. Most of the 186 WAC fatalities were not so dramatic. According to Lave, illness was the biggest cause of death, with 72 cases. The report did not break down the nature of those illnesses, but it is probable that some, even most, were war-related. WACs stationed in North Africa and in the Pacific, for example, were exposed to unknown tropical diseases, while those in Europe worked in extreme cold and wet, in an era when pneumonia often was fatal.

That these fatal illnesses among WACs were related to

their foreign environment may be demonstrated by the fact that in the United States, where conditions of life were equal for men and women on military bases, women in all services appeared healthier than men. A Navy physician who studied the subject told *Newsweek* that WAVES were much less likely than men to report to sick bay. “The per capita ratio,” he said, “is one sick Wave to four sick men.”

Although the necrology on WAC deaths did not delve into fatal illnesses, it did detail the larger number of deaths from accidents and violence. Aircraft and motor vehicle accidents caused eighty fatalities, while smaller numbers of women died from falls, burns, drowning, and poisoning. One was struck by lightning; another died in a European avalanche; six were murdered, and twelve committed suicide. A fire in WAC barracks at Ladd Field, Alaska, killed Private First Class Ione Dries of Wisconsin, and nine other women were injured when they jumped from second-story windows. Captain Edythe Barton also was seriously burned in the June 26, 1945 fire.

Of the WAC's 186 total, 54 deaths occurred overseas, and 34 of those were the result of plane crashes. Most of the airplane deaths (23) occurred in the ETO, especially over Britain's crowded skies. The single worst crash was a few weeks after V-E Day. On May 30, 1945, an army transport plane carrying three male crew members and eighteen enlisted WACs plunged into the sea off of what was then called the French Ivory Coast, leaving no survivors. Most of the women had served with the Air Transport Command in British West Africa; they were en route to Liberia and then to new duties in France. Their leaders were Sergeant Doris Cooper of Champaign, Illinois, and Corporal Velma Holder of Asheville, North Carolina. The names of others, all of whom were privates, offers an indication of WAC diversity:

Rose Brohinsky	New York, New York
Flossie Flannery	Muncie, Indiana
Freida Friend	Brooklyn, New York
Mary Gollinger	San Francisco, California
Odessa Hollingsworth	Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
Alice Dana King	Oswego, Oregon
Wilna Eva Liles	Dallas, Texas
Evelyn McBride	Austin, Texas
Alice McKinnery	Big Bay, Michigan
Rose Puchilla	Minneapolis, Minnesota
Mildred Rice	Kansas City, Kansas
Pearl Roomsburg	Los Angeles, California
Helen Rozzelle	Washington, D.C.
Leona Marie Seyfert	Chicago, Illinois
Ruth Warlick	Fort Worth, Texas
Bonnie Williams	Geuda Springs, Kansas

A Pacific Theater crash that also was late in the war received more attention because there were survivors—and because getting those survivors out of the difficult New Guinea terrain proved complex. The C-47 was bound for Australia, but its pilot diverted to show the women the Hidden Valley



The flag-draped coffins hold six nurses who were killed when the hospital ship USS *Comfort* was attacked by a Japanese suicide plane in April 1945, off the coast of Okinawa. *U.S. Navy Photo, Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

of the Cyclops Mountains, a storied place where cannibals reputedly lived. The plane failed to pull out of the valley fast enough and crashed deep into a ravine on May 13, 1945. Just two of sixteen men aboard survived, while three of the nine women initially were alive. Staff Sergeant Laura Besley and Private First Class (PFC) Eleanor Hanna, both of Pennsylvania, soon died of their injuries and of exposure on the nine-thousand-foot mountain. Corporal Maggie Hastings of Oswego, New York, survived forty-seven days in the jungle, despite being badly burned on her face, feet, and legs.

It took pilots four days to locate the three; a week to drop supplies close enough for them to reach; and even longer for medics to arrive and treat their injuries. Two weeks after the crash, Hastings said that a parachute brought crosses and a Star of David, which she and the two men used on makeshift graves while chaplains broadcast a funeral service from the airplane above. As the war in the Pacific went on, however, the graves were forgotten until 1958, when Dutch explorers came upon the site.

The bodies then were interned at the Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery in St. Louis, Missouri. One of the dead was Sgt. Helen Greene Kent of Butte, Montana, whose husband had been shot down over Europe war two years earlier. In addition to the two women who survived briefly, the other female fatalities were PFC Alethia M. Fair of Santa Monica, California; PFC Marian C. Gillis of Los Angeles; PFC Mary M. Landau of Brooklyn; Technician 3rd Grade Marion W. McMongale of Philadelphia; and Sergeant Belle G. Naimer of Boston.

Beyond WACs and military nurses, there were other women in uniform in overseas danger, especially Red Cross nurses: although they were supposed to be immune from enemy fire, that was not always the case. “Clubmobile” women employed by the Red Cross to serve doughnuts to troops also could be fatalities. One of them, Kay Cullen, was killed by German bombs during the Battle of the Bulge; she is buried near Liege, Belgium. Like the Red Cross women, female fatalities with other civilian agencies are likely to be underestimated. Individual cases were easily lost, falling

between the cracks of organizations that did not assign staff to accumulate these hard facts.

“Production soldiers,” civilian women who worked in defense plants, also suffered fatalities that often have been forgotten. Munitions workers were the most likely to die. Fifteen were killed and fifty-four wounded in a gunpowder explosion at Elkton, Maryland, in May 1943, and there was a second explosion at the same place in September. The Chemical Warfare Arsenal in Pine Bluff, Arkansas, also suffered two fatal explosions. OSHA did not yet exist, however, nor did the Women’s Bureau of the Department of Labor have the staff to systemically collect statistics on female industrial fatalities. After initial local publicity, defense executives naturally would downplay such accidents, and the historical record would be lost. Both Susan B. Anthony II, who wrote of World War II at the time, and contemporary historian Lisa Ossian strongly make the point that industrial and farm accidents caused more annual fatalities than combat. Even when they worked directly in defense industries, however, “production soldiers” were not eligible for military decorations or flag-draped funerals.

Business and military leaders, as well as those of charities such as the Red Cross, also were reluctant to let the public to know of female fatalities because they believed that hurt recruitment for their cause, especially desperately needed nurses. One indication that people did not know the true numbers is that near the war’s end, a letter writer to *Life*—with every good intention of honoring women—said: “Forty-five women in uniform have been killed or wounded on duty. More than 250 have been decorated. Women are veterans of Bataan, of Anzio, of Normandy.” That was true, but also seriously understated: by then, the WASP alone had nearly that many fatalities—within the United States.

Other women could be considered casualties from the war’s beginning, when Japan attacked Alaskan islands and in the bombing of Hawaii’s Pearl Harbor. Near the end of the war, on May 5, 1945, Elsie Mitchell and five youngsters she was supervising died when an incendiary balloon sent from Japan exploded at Bly, Oregon. But relatively few American

women died—and most who did accepted that possibility willingly. Unlike men and the women of Britain and Russia, American women were not drafted, and those who joined the military naturally were risk takers. No one insisted that they serve—and indeed, the military put up many obstacles to prevent women from giving their all. Female fatalities died as they lived, full human beings taking an active part in the fight for freedom.

*See also:* **Air WACs; Alaskan women; Army Nurse Corps; Bataan; British women; defense industries; draft; European Theater of Operations; Fort, Cornelia; Jensen, Agnes; Kent, Helen Greene; Maasdam; males, comparisons with; Marines, women; military occupational speciality; Navy Nurse Corps; North Africa; Pacific Theater of Operations; Pearl Harbor; prisoners of war; recruitment; Red Cross; refugees; Russian women; SPARS; WAVES; WASP; widows; Women's Army Corps**

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### FLEESON, DORIS (1901–1970)

A longtime political columnist for the *New York Daily News*, Fleeson's straight-talk style fit well with the paper's tough blue-collar audience—and yet she also was capable of shaping her words to appeal to the more demure readers of *Woman's Home Companion*. In an era when many female reporters feared that writing for women diminished their stature, she rose above that stereotype.

Fleeson earned a 1923 journalism degree from the University of Kansas, and after working at small midwestern papers, moved to New York in 1926 and began at the lowest rung of the *Daily News*. Her 1930 marriage to colleague John O'Donnell proved a huge mistake; although they had a daughter and stayed together twelve years, his views became increasingly conservative, while hers became more liberal, especially after the 1933 beginning of the Roosevelt administration and Fleeson's developing friendship with Eleanor Roosevelt. Her 1942 divorce from O'Donnell, during the first year of American involvement in World War II, signaled the beginning of her independent life.

While he went on to lead the "slander campaign" against the Women's Army Corps (WAC), his ex-wife wrote a book about accompanying the first WACs to England. She graphically described their secret East Coast staging area for departure, as they prepared to defy German submarines that lurked in the North Atlantic. Restroom mirrors were marked with "If You Talk, This Woman May Die." Fleeson added to gravity with details such as: "personal movements are heavily restricted. Telephoning, even by officers, is out ... So far as his family is concerned, the soldier has already left America."

A few months later, in January 1944, she followed up with an article for *Woman's Home Companion* on the Italian front and the dangers that Army Nurse Corps women routinely accepted in this part of the European Theater of Operations. In June came D-Day, the giant invasion to free France from German occupation. Military officials were slow to allow reporters, and especially female reporters, into that front, but Fleeson and the *New York Herald-Tribune's* Tania Long Daniell arrived in Normandy two weeks after the first soldiers. The ship on which they crossed the English Channel was unable to land because of fog, and after three days of frustrating waiting, the women climbed down the hull of the huge ship into a tiny boat and went ashore—where they met more frustration. Daniell, a young newlywed, found military inhospitably to women more surprising than did veteran Fleeson, and Daniell told author Lilya Wagner:

When Doris Fleeson, columnist for the *Daily News*, and I arrived in Normandy, the army would not put us up in the press camp, but put me and Doris into two different hospitals, with the nurses ... The result, of course, was that we had an awful time keeping up with the news. We did mostly features and had to scrounge for transportation.

Features, though, were what set Fleeson apart from other reporters: she specialized in the human side of events that





Doris Fleson with soldiers on the Italian front in 1943. Note that they sit above a foxhole, which provides shelter if enemy fire begins. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

made the endless battle news meaningful to readers. At the war's end, she reached out to more readers with her passionately committed political news, always writing on behalf of the underdog. The *Washington Star* and *Boston Globe* both began to syndicate her in 1945, and according to her friend and colleague, columnist Mary McGrory, by 1952 *Newsweek* awarded Fleson "the abominable accolade" of the "Capitol's top newshen."

Despite a 1958 marriage to a naval industrialist, Fleson covered the White House during the Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, and Johnson administrations before she collapsed on the 1964 campaign trail. A founder of the American Newspaper Guild and a conscious feminist, she even led a campaign for proper women's restrooms in the congressional press galleries. "She was notoriously kind to younger women reporters," McGrory said, "indulgent and encouraging to a degree that caused wonderment and envy among the male politicians whom she skewered."

**See also:** Army Nurse Corps; correspondents, war; D-Day; divorce; European Theater of Operations; marriage; Roosevelt, Eleanor; "slander campaign"; travel; Women's Army Corps

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## FLIGHT NURSES

Like "Air WAC," the term "flight nurse" was commonly used, but was not an official military designation. "Flight nurses" were members of the Army Nurse Corps (ANC) and—less often—the Navy Nurse Corps (NNC), who flew with wounded men on airplanes. The Air Force did not yet exist as an independent entity, but World War II was the first in which there was extensive use of planes for any purpose—and the idea of treating patients in the air was a wholly new and amazing phenomenon.

The concept did not evolve until fairly late in the war, when big planes and medical technology became available. Because of the hard work of women who took new jobs in the aircraft industry, sufficient numbers of bomber and fighter planes were being built by 1943 that manufacturers could divert some resources for great silver hospital ships that sailed through the air. They were, in fact, cargo planes: the same plane that brought wounded men out of a battle-front also brought supplies in to it. Nurses rode atop boxes of ammunition and other goods on the way to battle sites, and, while they performed triage and first aid, the plane was quickly unloaded and converted to medical use.

The typical plane had three vertical bunks attached to each of the two fuselage walls, with just enough room for a nurse to move in the aisle between them. Six patients were thus within her arm's length—although she had to kneel for the one nearest the floor and reach for the man at the top, with only the middle bunk at a comfortable working height. Later planes, especially when the Navy Nurse Corps began similar work early in 1945, had space for twenty-four patients, with

An Army flight nurse supervises the loading of a patient aboard an evacuation aircraft in Burma. These young women did an outstanding job in a new and difficult role. *Courtesy of Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*



six bucket seats in the tail for “the walking wounded.” Planes of that size usually had two nurses assigned to them.

Lack of space was not the biggest problem; instead, it was the fact that airplanes were not yet properly pressurized. Early commercial airlines, in fact, expected that a lack of oxygen would make so many passengers airsick that as late as the 1950s, flight attendants had to be credentialed nurses. A few of those women joined the military, but many who became “flight nurses” had never before set foot in a plane. The prospect of this new career was so exciting, however, that applications from nurses poured into the army’s new School of Air Evacuation at Bowman Field, Kentucky.

There women learned the effects that flying had on the human body. They learned, for example, that men with certain types of wounds should not fly above a certain altitude and that the dosages of some drugs had to be increased or decreased to compensate for the effects of altitude. The curriculum also included a demanding physical education element, with parachute drill, simulated bombing and strafing, fully-clad swimming, and dodging live machine-gun fire. After women began flying into dangerous territory in the Pacific Theater of Operation (PTO), the school also began secretly training nurses in the use of pistols, which some women carried on duty.

The level of agility demanded by this curriculum meant that its graduates were young, but young people grew up fast during the war. Although likely to be in her twenties, a flight nurse accepted extraordinary responsibility as she cared for the most critical of patients with no physician available. Her trips were a busy routine of administering hypodermics and oxygen and plasma, of washing, sterilizing, and bandaging, and of holding cigarettes for men whose hands were useless, but whose bodies demanded nicotine. In an emergency, her own judgment was all that she could count on, and she often did a doctor’s duty.

Sometimes she had psychotic cases onboard, shell-shocked men whose behavior could not be predicted. Added to the psychological stress was the fact that many patients never had flown. Navy nurse Stella Makar Smith told author Diane Burke Fessler, for instance, of a young man shot in the jaw and unable to speak. He nodded affirmatively when asked if this was his first flight, and on the six-hour trip from Iwo Jima to Guam, she said, “his eyes never left my face.” Other women said that because patients were tense, nurses liked to fly at high altitude: the lack of oxygen caused nervous passengers to relax and fall asleep.

Unlike some projects in which women pioneered unprecedented roles, the military had developed enough confidence in women’s abilities that flight nursing was publicized from its beginning. “Flying Nurses Aid U.S. African Campaign” read a *Life* story in April 1943, while the *New York Times Magazine* followed in August with “The Most Rewarding Work.” The *Life* report detailed women’s flights in North Africa, which became the war’s first major front as British and American troops tried to push German and Italian soldiers out of British and French colonies from Egypt to Morocco.

Much of this area is mountainous, and planes were extremely useful in taking men from disaster sites such as the battle at Tunisia’s Kasserine Pass. Ground nurses there were caught behind German lines, and First Lieutenant Mary Ann Sullivan earned the Legion of Merit for her valor. The first flight nurses arrived in North Africa in January 1943, soon after the Bowman Field school opened. Dorothy Lonergan Jouvenat was one, and she recounted to Fessler:

We began flying out of Algiers, as close as possible to the fighting, close enough to hear the guns. Sometimes we had fighter planes as escorts. Patients were in ambulances or on the ground in litters waiting for us, and their wounds were only hours old. We evacuated all nationalities, and when we had POWs, they were accompanied by armed guards.

She and her colleagues eventually would move from North Africa into the European Theater of Operation (ETO) via Sicily and the Italian peninsula. Meanwhile, plans were being made in England for the June 6, 1944 D-Day invasion to liberate France from German control. ETO flight nurses initially had just a short hop from Normandy back to Britain, but that action marked the first general public knowledge of the flight-nurse phenomena. Many men stayed in hospitals in England, where they were treated by American nurses, and then returned to the ETO. Others who were so badly injured that they had to be discharged went home, and Betty Theobald Blagen was the first flight nurse to escort such veterans. She took men from the initial horrific Omaha Beach invasion back to New York, and told Fessler: “we used relays in C-45s from Prestwick, Scotland, to Iceland, to Newfoundland, then to New York. Sometimes we stopped in the Azores...”

Women flew longer and longer distances within the ETO as the front moved east. Some went even to the little-publicized battle sites in southeastern Europe, but because of wartime censorship, their heroics were overlooked by the contemporary media. This was especially the case for Agnes Jensen and her colleagues, whose pilot got lost in bad weather between Sicily and the Italian peninsula. Out of fuel after five hours on what should have been a ninety-minute trip, he landed in Albanian snow smoothly enough so that none of the two-dozen passengers was killed—but it took hallowing and heartbreaking weeks for her and twelve other women to escape from the frigid, German-held territory.

Although the public knew nothing of this incident, there was a good deal of publicity about flight nurses on the other side of the world, especially on the front labeled CBI, or China//Burma/India. Chinese and British troops took the lead there, but some American soldiers also endured extremely tough fighting against the Japanese. In the nearly roadless mountains of northern Burma, for example, it would have taken weeks for mule-packs to bring wounded soldiers to safety, but with flying hospitals and their flight nurses, men could go from a bloody battle to a clean bed in a matter of hours. The CBI's unique geography, in fact, resulted in it having the first woman credited as a “flight nurse.” Elsie Ott Mandot was the first to earn an Air Medal for her January 1943 flight. She explained to Fessler:

I was chosen ... [for] an “experimental” flight, which took seven days and covered ten thousand miles. I had only a few hours’ notice to prepare for this flight from Karachi, India, to ... [Washington, D.C.]. The plane wasn’t equipped to carry patients, and every night we stopped at airfields in different countries where the patients could be checked at medical facilities. The contagious ones were placed in the bomb bay ... This was my first flight and I was a little airsick ...

Audrey Rodgers McDonald earned a Purple Heart when she was wounded by Japanese shrapnel in the CBI. Most of her patients were Chinese, and she cared for them on a route from Burma to India. Once, she said to Fessler, she had a Chinese patient “with a five-inch gash in his scalp, split wide open.” It had not been inflicted by the enemy: instead,

other Chinese men told her that this man had “gone berserk, so they beat ‘the devil’ out of him.” She also added that “a group of black nurses and doctors” had briefly worked with them and that “the Chinese patients didn’t know what to make of these darker nurses, and to avoid problems, they were told these were American Indians. The patients could understand that somehow.”

Like Mandot, a few other ANC women in the Pacific Theater of Operation (PTO) began working as flight nurses prior to the opening of the Bowman Field school that taught air evacuation. Dorothy Shikoski McCarthy was one; she even survived a New Zealand plane crash in which the navigator was killed; she had a broken leg and injured back, but managed to go back to work within six weeks. In April 1944, when she and her “untrained” colleagues had a furlough in the United States, she said, also to Fessler, “they made us take the course in Kentucky. The instructors became very tired of our correcting their lessons because we knew what it was really like.”

The first Bowman graduates arrived in the PTO in February 1943, just a month after Mandot’s experimental flight from the CBI. These first PTO women settled in at New Caledonia, where Margaret Richey Raffa told Fessler that the twenty-four nurses lived in a tent shared by “millions of mosquitoes,” with a river for their laundry facility. They flew from that headquarters near hostilities, as Raffa continued: “sometimes we had to make forced landings



A Navy flight nurse going over medical records with the corpsman under her command. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*



because of maintenance or weather or fuel shortages ... [in] fields under attack by the Japanese, and we'd often have to head for foxholes." Charlotte McFall Mallon also survived a crash; she and another nurse, Mary Creel, "jumped out through the flames." Mallon summarized, "I flew all over the Pacific: Biak, New Guinea, Tarawa, Gilbert Islands, Leyte and Luzon ... Hawaii."

The PTO, with its "island-hopping" strategy of retaking Pacific lands from the Japanese and moving north towards Tokyo, involved more use of the U.S. Navy and Marines than of the Army that dominated the ETO. The Navy Nurse Corps therefore adopted the flight-nurse techniques that the Army had developed, building its counterpart to Kentucky's Bowman Field at Alameda, California. Its first twelve graduates arrived in Guam in February 1945, very shortly after the island was taken and while fires still were burning.

NNC member Jeanne Doll Dolan was one of the women who regularly flew from Guam to the bloody battles of Iwo Jima and Okinawa. She too survived a crash: the pilot couldn't see because of fog and hit a coral rock; the occupants just got out before the gasoline tank exploded. Her biggest concern was her responsibility for the box of morphine, which, she said, nurses guarded "with our lives." A few ANC women expressed jealousy of the attention that the NNC got when they began flight nursing, but Dolan seemed unaware of this. She said that because she and other NNC women "had to scourge for places to stay on these islands," she "just dearly loved the army flight nurses" who willingly shared their quarters.

The Japanese never reached the English-speaking nations of Australia or New Zealand, and some nurses restored their souls there. The trip from Guadalcanal to New Caledonia, for example, took two tiring, unnerving days, but then an ANC woman got two days off to swim or dance with other Americans at the hospital complex. Every three months, she had ten days off, and if she could find a hop to New Zealand or Australia, she could reacquaint herself with hot baths and telephones. At the end of a year, she was entitled to a long leave at home. As a forerunner of the Rest & Recreation (R&R) that has become fundamental to the modern military, these policies indicated the privileged status of flight nurses and were part of the reason why so many women applied for the new category of work..

On the other hand, flight nursing was arguably more dangerous than other nursing simply because the same plane that brought wounded men out of a battlefield also brought supplies in to it—which meant that the Red Cross could not be painted on the plane. By the time of flight nursing, however, women already had learned in both the ETO and PTO that both German and Japanese pilots would attack clearly-marked hospitals. Nurses had been bombed from Bataan to Belgium, and the lack of a protective Red Cross on planes was not a determining factor in their willingness to volunteer for this duty. In the end, many more nursing fatalities occurred on the ground than in the air.

Flight nurses nonetheless were the first women to be officially exposed to as much danger as if they were in combat.

They also worked with the most critical of patients without assistance from a doctor, and their success record in the face of these dangers therefore is nothing short of astonishing. In the South Pacific, these young women took some thirty-seven thousand men out of combat—and lost just one patient.

*See also:* **aircraft workers; Air WACS; Army Nurse Corps; Bataan; censorship; cigarettes; D-Day; European Theater of Operation; fatalities; Jensen, Agnes; Navy Nurse Corps; nurses; Pacific Theater of Operation; prisoners of war; Red Cross**

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## FLIKKE, JULIA O. (1878--1965)

The commander of the Army Nurse Corps (ANC) when World War II began, Julia Flikke became the army's first female colonel during the first year of the war.

She was born Julia Otteson to a Scandinavian family in rural Wisconsin and taught briefly after earning her high school diploma, something that was not unusual at the time. She married Arne Flikke in 1901, but was widowed just a decade later, when he died of tuberculosis. Their only child died at birth, after a difficult labor. Both experiences motivated her to enroll in nursing school.

Flikke moved to Chicago as a thirty-four-year-old widow and graduated in 1915 from Augustana Hospital School of Nursing, a well-respected hospital built by Swedish-American Lutherans. From there, she went on to the even more prestigious Teachers College of Columbia University in New York City, where she studied nursing education and administration. She returned to Augustana as assistant superintendent of nursing, but the United States entered World War I in 1917, and Flikke joined the Army Nurse Corps early in 1918.

The ANC had begun in 1901, the year of her marriage, in

response to needs made clear by the 1898 Spanish-American War. With her excellent educational credentials and mature experience, Flikke soon developed an outstanding career. She served in France, treating men during the terrible fighting in the Argonne region, and at the war's November 11th end, worked on a hospital train transporting wounded soldiers to home-bound ships.

After brief service in New York and Arkansas, where the military had a major hospital at Hot Springs, Flikke was assigned to the Philippines in 1920. Much later, she would write in her 1943 book, *Nurses in Action*, that "almost any Nurse Corps veteran has memories of service in the Philippines, Alaska, Hawaii, Panama, or China." This was also the case for her, as she went on to China and other assignments, including the army's esteemed Walter Reed Hospital in Washington, D.C. She was promoted from lieutenant to captain in 1927, while serving in Texas.

Early in 1937, she returned to Washington and the Surgeon General's Office, where she prepared to replace Major Julia Stimson as superintendent of the corps. Those were big shoes to fill: Stimson's World War I service was so valuable that she had been honored with the Distinguished Service Medal in 1918, the year that Flikke joined the ANC. Stimson had served as its chief since 1920, or almost half of the corps' existence. She had been a major all of that long time—a rank much lower than that of any other corps' chief.

Flikke held that rank, too, until Congress finally raised rank and benefits for military nurses, in December 1942. Her promotion to colonel was much more than overdue: by then, Flikke headed an organization that had gone from about seven hundred members in peacetime 1940 to over fifty thousand women. In comparison, some male colonels command no more than five hundreds men. Moreover, the women who headed the new WAC, WAVES, and other corps outranked her from their very first day, while by that time, Flikke was a thirty-four-year veteran.

She also had done an amazing organizational job. Already in April 1941, well before the United States entered the war, the ANC was taking in approximately one thousand new nurses every month. Even that would not be enough, however, as the shortage of nurses became sufficiently critical that the Nurses Selective Service Bill of 1945 proposed drafting these women. Nothing was more important than recruiting nurses, a goal shared by her Navy Nurse Corps counterpart, Sue Dauser. Both women also had to walk a careful line between cooperation with their male military colleagues and their female civilian colleagues, especially in the Red Cross, the American Nurses Association, and other groups, including the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses headed by Mabel K. Staupers. Much more than most military positions, theirs called for endless diplomacy and negotiation.

At age sixty-five, Flikke stepped aside from the superintendent position in June 1943, leaving that to her well-qualified colleague, Florence Blanchfield—who already had assumed much of the ANC's administrative work, while Flikke concentrated on *Nurses in Action*, with the intention

of its use as a recruiting tool. A full-length book, it detailed the work of ANC women on fronts from Africa to Australia to Alaska, from India and Iran and from Burma to Britain. Her writing had none of the bureaucratic jargon that might be expected from someone so long exposed to the Washington ways. Instead, it resounded with the spirited, yet somber, attitudes of the young women who made up the ANC ranks—and who were its recruitment target. Flikke, for example, quoted a nurse in Italy:

War is now to us an Awful Actuality and not something we hear about on the radio. Our friends are being killed—these gay young lads we danced with last week; these fine young men who told us their plans for the future "when all this is over and the world has stopped being mad." We don't discuss their deaths; we pat each other on the shoulder and say, "Well, he's had it."

Probably because nursing was an accepted female activity and because the ANC was in its fourth decade by the time of World War II, Flikke got almost no media attention compared with that given to the women who headed the new corps, especially the WAC's Colonel Oveta Culp Hobby. Flikke's Scandinavian upbringing valued modesty and quietness; she behaved pleasantly and avoided controversy—and was ignored. Yet she managed a corps in which the number of personnel soared over fifty times within a matter of months. Unlike male commanders, her subordinates were assigned literally all over the globe. The executive ability demonstrated by this merited more recognition than it received.

Julia Flikke lived in Takoma Park, Maryland, until entering the National Lutheran Home for the Aged in Washington, where she died at age eighty-six. She is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

*See also: American Nurses' Association; Army Nurse Corps; Blanchfield, Florence; Dauser, Sue; Hobby, Oveta Culp; Navy Nurse Corps; nurses; Nurses Selective Service Bill of 1945; rank; Red Cross; WAVES; Women's Army Corps*

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## FOOD, SHORTAGES/PRODUCTION CHANGES

The first American women caught up in World War II were glad for anything to eat. As bombs destroyed the few supplies they carried during a months-long retreat from the Philippine capital of Manila to Bataan and Corregidor, army nurses ate stew from water-buffalo and monkeys. By the surrender, a full day's ration was a half-cup of rice with a few bits of mule meat, and some women nearly starved to death as prisoners of war during the next three years. Their writings are full of allusions to food: of canned peaches someone found under a Bataan bridge; of the Corregidor tunnel where nurses crawled at night to a secret kitchen cache; of Filipinos who risked their lives to slip a bite through a prison fence.

Food truly mattered during World War II. From hungry Europeans whose crops were wiped out during years of warfare to victims of Nazi concentration camps, where starvation was policy, eating was more important than almost anything else. Along with allies in the less populous nations of Australia and Canada, America became the breadbasket for the world. Both Britain and the United States developed a Women's Land Army to replace men in traditional agricultural work, but research and development in laboratories and processing plants would bring changes that forever changed the food supply.

The first shortages to gain widespread American attention came just after the U.S. entered the war in December 1941. When Japan bombed Pearl Harbor and its German and Italian allies declared war on the United States, both the Pacific and Atlantic oceans effectively closed to routine commercial shipping. Everything from Hawaii's pineapples to Indonesia's spices to Latin America's cocoa dwindled and disappeared from the stores. Sugar was the first major item that Americans missed, followed quickly by coffee. Both require micro-climates unavailable in the U.S., and to fairly divide the smaller quantities that could get through, the federal government instituted a system of rationing.

These shortages also encouraged innovation. Agronomists began research on sugar beets, for example, which since has made American kitchens less dependent on sugar cane. Coffee is still not profitably grown in any state except Hawaii, but World War II laboratories began developing instant coffee, which is lighter and easier to ship, along with a huge range of powdered, dried, frozen, or other new forms of food delivery. The industry's goal became not only higher production, but also easier packaging, transportation, and especially longer-lasting and more nutritious food. Providing vitamins—still a new idea to many people—was more important than enjoying a meal, and taste became a lesser priority. Eating for life and health, not for pleasure, and the common comment at American dinner tables became “clean your plate; children in Europe are starving.”

Although wartime food innovations were motivated by an emergency, many proved so satisfactory and have been so widely accepted that their origin is forgotten. Margarine is one example. Cooks in that era depended on either rationed

butter or on coconut, palm, or olive oils, all of which came from overseas and soon disappeared. Soybean-based margarine would be the solution. It was so successful that after the war, some legislatures in the dairy-dominated Midwest made it difficult to buy this new butter substitute: they passed laws prohibiting the sale of margarine except in uncolored, unappetizing lumps—and thereby demonstrated that dairy farmers needed legal protection for butter, as housewives otherwise would opt for margarine. When soybeans also became a big crop, the laws were repealed, and a decade after the war, margarine was a standard American staple. Soybeans also were the basis of the first non-dairy “whipped cream.” Introduced in 1945, the last year of the war, its makers touted the ability of this dessert topping to remain edible after more than a year in a freezer.

Many other new forms of food appeared, including instant mashed potatoes, powdered eggs, and powdered milk. Dehydration probably was the most popular preservation technique, and although a few such products—such as pumpkin flakes—did not work out, it permanently changed the food scene. Dried soup mixes continued to be especially popular long after the need for light-weight shipping disappeared. Powdered eggs probably were the most unpopular. The records of several women stationed overseas complained about their taste, and fresh eggs were among the most valuable trading items in the European Theater of Operations (ETO); some men brought eggs to their dates instead of traditional flowers or candy. Like powdered eggs, the public did not care for the powdered form of orange juice, but after freezers became widely available in the postwar world, concentrated orange juice, frozen in a paper tube and then mixed with water, became an almost mandatory part of the American breakfast.

At the same time as these new foods, the relatively new profession of dietician—a field almost entirely composed of women—gained new respect, even to the point that the military added it as an MOS (military occupational specialty). There never were nearly enough dieticians to serve all military facilities, however, and so it was largely untrained cooks, mostly male, who first introduced Americans overseas to such things as powdered eggs and the war's most-discussed meat innovation, Spam. Without bone or any other waste to be discarded, this dense, canned pork product was designed for maximum shipping efficiency and for the high caloric intake that soldiers needed. In the end, however, as meat rationing was imposed within the United States, more civilians than soldiers ate Spam.

The Army Quartermaster Corps is in charge of food supply, but much of its long experience was bad. More than any other corps, it had a reputation for corruption; in both the Civil War and Spanish-American War, men died from food poisoning because of personal schemes that meant soldiers got rotten food. Especially Union women in the Civil War struggled, often in vain, to supply a decent diet to soldiers—and long before knowledge of vitamins, these women understood that fruit and vegetables were essential



to good health. As late as the 1920s, however, the army's official daily ration included only coffee, sugar, hard bread, and meat—albeit sixteen ounces of meat per day. Navy men had almost axiomatically worse diets, as months at sea left little opportunity for fresh food.

Nutritional science made huge leaps in the early twentieth century, and the first modern army ration item was introduced by Colonel Paul Logan in the late 1930s. Called Field Ration D, it was a chocolate bar fortified with oatmeal that provided six hundred calories. In the same era, the Quartermaster Corps also adopted “a meal in a can,” a stew of twelve vegetables and several meats designed for balanced nutrition. Three cans of this, plus a can each of crackers, sugar, and coffee became Field Ration C. Liquor and tobacco were routinely supplied in separate rations, usually monthly.

Neither Ration D nor C was ideal, though, as the seeming candy bars left soldiers feeling unsatisfied, and the canned meals were too heavy to carry for many days. The result was the K Ration, which became the most commonly used by mobile troops in World War II—including some nurses and members of the Women's Army Corps (WAC). Developed in 1942 at the University of Minnesota, K Rations consciously included essential vitamins and minerals, supplying a proper balance of protein, carbohydrates, and fats in a light-weight, meal-like form. Although K Rations also included cigarettes, they were the first major forerunner of today's MREs, or Meals Ready to Eat. The space program of the following decades would refine the concept, using irradiation and other techniques to enable almost any kind of food to be safely eaten literally years later. Taste and especially texture were lost in the process, of course, but even such spoilage-prone foods as raspberries, for example, now can be eaten as fruit strips. Indeed, much of the food that appeals to today's children—and provides them with essential nutrition—can be traced back to these origins.

K Rations were for troops in combat situations, as *Life* correspondent Margaret Bourke-White wrote of the Italian front:

We had a stand-up breakfast, handed out from the rear end of a truck ... The truck had brought K rations, which are packed in flat, waterproof cans, each holding enough concentrated food for one person for one meal. We were given our choice of breakfast, dinner, or supper rations. The supper unit contains a can of cheese flavored with bacon, and breakfast and dinner units consist of varying degrees of blended egg yolk with chipped ham or sausage. The truck drivers had picked up a twenty-gallon can of hot coffee on the way, and Ruthie ... ladled it out in ... empty plasma cans. We stood knee-deep in mud, in the drizzling rain, eating our cold K on crackers.

Their mess tent had been bombed, but few women recorded pleasant eating experiences in ETO camps. Although many WACs praised the food they ate in basic-training camps back in the United States, praise for field-kitchen food was extremely rare. Grace Porter Miller, for example, had lifelong digestion problems that she attributed to the war. She

**Americans!**  
**SHARE THE MEAT**  
**as a wartime necessity**

*To meet the needs of our armed forces and fighting allies, a Government order limits the amount of meat delivered to stores and restaurants.*

*To share the supply fairly, all civilians are asked to limit their consumption of beef, veal, lamb, mutton and pork to 2½ lbs. per person per week.*

**YOUR FAIR WEEKLY SHARE**

Men, women and children over 12 yrs. old .....	2½ Pounds per week
Children 6 to 12 yrs. old .....	1½ Pounds per week
Children under 6 yrs. old .....	¾ Pound per week

*You can add these foods to your share: liver, sweetbreads, kidneys, brains and other variety meats; also poultry and fish.*

**HELP WIN THE WAR!**  
**Keep within your share**

FOODS REQUIREMENT COMMITTEE  
 War Production Board

*Claude R. Wickard*  
 Chairman

OWI Poster No. 15. Additional copies may be obtained upon request from the Division of Public Inquiries, Office of War Information, Washington, D. C.

This 1942 poster shows limits on meat purchases by age.  
 Courtesy of Library of Congress

remembered especially that the WAC schedule in Belgium during the bitterly cold winter of 1944–45 forced them to arrive for their evening meal after the fire had burned low in the big outdoor kettles. Her autobiography spoke with disgust for the invariable “leftover mutton stew ... [with] mutton fat ... congealing at least four inches thick on the top.”

Army nurse Agnes Jensen had a similar reaction to greasy food during the winter of 1943–1944, when she and a dozen other women were trapped in German-occupied Albania. Even though they faced starvation, she reached the point that she became nauseated whenever she was near the sight or smell of animal fats. Her stomach began its rejection soon after an incident that occurred when the women were secreted on the second floor of a house owned by an American sympathizer:

The downstairs door opened, and they could hear a man speaking in Albanian. All eyes turned to the stairs as he walked up with a skinned animal on his shoulder. He nodded to the women, laid the animal on the floor ... and announced, “Sheep.” Before anyone could say a word, he had started down the stairs ... The women who had pocket knives in the musette bags got them out and began hacking at the sheep ...

Other women also developed eating disorders not so much because of the wartime food itself, but because of its psycho-

logical associations. As American victory brought Red Cross worker Alice Niestockel closer to Germany, for example, she told author Olga Gruhitz-Hoyt that she was so disturbed by the sight and smell of dead bodies she could not eat or drink. The same was true for men. Many wives and mothers wrote of how difficult it was to persuade convalescing men to eat; these veterans had seen such terrible things that their stomachs simply refused to enjoy food. Eating disorders were real long before that term was invented.

Food also was a staple of written communication between men and women. Many letters, however, show a unexpected phenomenon: while the media and especially women's magazines ran countless stories promoting food conservation because of soldiers' needs, it often turned out that they were eating far better than their families back home. Marian Smith is just one example of this. She shared housing with another woman and sent near-daily letters to her future husband, Gene Petersen, who served with the Marines in the Pacific. In late May, 1945—after the war in Europe was over—she wrote:

Food around here has not been very good lately & I was glad to hear you're not having the same difficulty. We haven't had fresh meat for two weeks. It's partly our own fault for not being aggressive enough to pester the butcher for it, but neither of us likes to do that. I had to laugh at Murph last night. I had pike, for the 2nd time this week, and she said, "I'm not really complaining now—but do you actually think this fish is good?"

In July, Smith said: "Gale's mother was here for dinner. She brought us three pork chops—a rare treat." His letters from Guam, in contrast, showed that both liquor and food were plentiful, and she added with jocular jealousy, "you & your six steaks!" Her experience was not exceptional, and public polls on the rationing system showed that most Americans thought that small families were the ones most inadequately served. In a sad irony, "small families" were most likely to be the wives and young children of soldiers asked to lay down their lives. Worse, rationing took no account of pregnant or nursing women—an omission that may be attributed to the fact that the War Food Administration's committee on nutritional needs was composed entirely of male physicians. No input was allotted for dieticians or home economists or even nurses, all of whom had more specifically relevant knowledge, as well as more experience with feeding those with special needs.

Nor did the need for food end when the war ended. In April 1946, *Christian Century* spoke out strongly on behalf of the world's hungry, even calling for the United States to return to rationing:

Food supplies in the British and American zones in Germany ... have recently been reduced again until they are now within a couple of hundred calories of the rations in the terrible Belsen concentration camp ... Conditions in France and Italy are far worse than after the First World War ... India is entering what is likely to be the worst famine in its history; in great sections of China the population is already living on grass and clay.

Polls showed that the public would willingly return to rationing if that were truly necessary, but the government did not follow up on this. Whether or not needs were real was understandably confused, as it was not uncommon for luxuries to be available when basics were not. *Life's* Margaret Bourke-White, for example, wrote when the German city of Cologne fell, a soldier told her "we've got so much champagne we're brushing our teeth in it." She investigated and said: "They actually were. The water system had been destroyed, and the champagne came in very handy." The same was true in other cities: fundamental needs such as water and milk were unobtainable, while people with access to Nazi caches could revel in caviar and champagne.

Such disparities have continued, and the complexity of food issues is clear as both famine and obesity fight for media attention. Hunger continues in America, even while most Americans struggle not to eat the endless menu choices available and while farmers are paid not to grow food. Just as the World War II generation made scientific advances on food production, it remains for another generation to reform its distribution.

**See also:** advertising; Bataan; Bourke-White, Margaret; British women; cigarettes; conservation; Davis, Fanny Fern; dieticians; hoarding; home economics; Jensen, Agnes; letters; magazines; MOS; Pearl Harbor; postwar; rationing; Women's Army Corps; Women's Land Army

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## FORT, CORNELIA (1919–1943)

Cornelia Fort's experience was one of the most dramatic of any American woman during World War II, yet it remains largely unknown.

Born in Nashville, Tennessee, she was a natural aviator, but her affluent family was not particularly supportive: according to authors Haynsworth and Toomey, Fort later told other female pilots that when she first soloed, her mother responded to the news with: "That's wonderful, dear. Now you won't have to do that again."

Although she later called aviation her "only knowledge," in fact, Cornelia Fort attended New York's elite Sarah Lawrence College, where she wrote newspaper editorials that pointed out the dangers of rising fascism. She graduated in 1939; the war in Europe began that fall. Still under her family's strong influence, she debuted at Christmas—but Nashville soon was too narrow. Flying became Fort's sole passion, and within months of earning her 1940 license, she was rated as an instructor. At twenty-two, she signed up to teach in the brief-lived Civilian Pilot Training program. She went to Fort Collins, Colorado—accompanied, according to author Marianne Vergas, by "the family chauffeur" because her mother refused to allow her to drive there alone.

She soon gained more independence and, early in 1941, moved on to Hawaii. There she again taught aviation, and on Sunday morning, December 7, 1941, ignoring her mother's admonitions about honoring the Sabbath, she met a male student. In an article for *Women's Home Companion*, Fort recounted:

At dawn that morning I drove from Waikiki to the ... civilian airport right next to Pearl Harbor, where I was a civilian pilot instructor. Shortly after six-thirty I began landing and take-off practice with my regular student. Coming in just before the last landing, I looked casually around and saw a military plane coming directly toward me. I jerked the controls away from my student and jammed the throttle wide open to pull above the oncoming plane. He passed so close under us that our celluloid windows rattled violently and I looked down to see what kind of plane it was.

The painted red balls on the tops of the wings shone brightly in the sun. I looked again with complete and utter disbelief.

She made it to the ground and dived for cover from the falling bombs. Other civilian planes did not return that tragic day, when Japan attacked the American fleet docked at Pearl Harbor. Within hours, Japan's fascist allies, Germany and Italy, declared war on the United States, and Congress responded on Monday with its declaration of war.

Very soon, however, Cornelia Fort and other female pilots were effectively banned from using their skills. For both security reasons and to conserve fuel, the skies closed to most small aircraft. The U.S. military did not accept female aviators, and the volunteer Civil Air Patrol exploited those associated with it, using women's private planes but not their personal abilities. When Fort finally got back to the mainland in the spring of 1942—after waiting three months for a ship—she found little viable use for her talents. She lived with her family, did some teaching and some war-bond sales publicity on her Pearl Harbor experience, but generally was frustrated about the fact that military policy was to train inexperienced men rather than use the abilities of credentialed women.

Other, older women were working on the problem. Some two dozen female American pilots had joined the British Air Transport Auxiliary during 1940 and 1941, when the United States still was neutral, but Britons desperately needed help: by spring of 1941, the tiny island of Great Britain was the sole European defender of democracy against Hitler's Nazis, and British women had endured months of bombing. Jacqueline Cochran was the most illustrious of the American women who went to their aid. She held numerous international speed records and was the first woman to fly a bomber over the Atlantic, delivering it from Canada to England. ATA women went on to play an important role in the European Theater of Operations (ETO), flying dozens of types of aircraft literally millions of miles.

During the same period, Nancy Harkness Love, who had flown planes from American aircraft factories to the Canadian border during neutrality, worked to begin the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS). Based in Delaware, this small but elite group of pilots was authorized on September 10, 1942—and Cornelia Fort was the first official member. The WAFS merged with Cochran's Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP), based at Sweetwater, Texas, on August 5, 1943, a month after Fort's article was published.

She began her story, "At the Twilight's Last Gleaming," by saying, "I knew I was going to join the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron, but I never knew it as surely as I did in Honolulu on December 7, 1941." She ended with:

As long as our planes fly overhead, the skies of America are free and that's what all of us everywhere are fighting for ... I, for one, am profoundly grateful that my one talent, my only knowledge, flying, happens to be of use to my country when it is needed. That's all the luck I ever hope to have.

Her luck, in fact, already had run out; Cornelia Fort was killed before her article was published. On March 21, 1943, she flew toward Dallas from the aircraft-manufacturing center of Long Beach, California, and stopped in west Texas for fuel. There a new pilot, Frank Stamme, flirted with the twenty-four-year-old Fort. Like so many young men, he could not distinguish between charming a woman and harassing her: he followed her into sky, showing off his lesser skills by circling and diving—and accidentally clipped



her wing. She apparently had the presence of mind to shut off her ignition, which may have prevented a fire when the plane slammed so far into the ground that its engine was buried two feet deep.

Just as Cornelia Fort had been the first to see a Japanese plane up close, she was America's first female pilot to die on duty. Nancy Love represented the WAFS at the Nashville funeral, and a memorial at Avenger Field honors her—the first of 38 WASPs who died in the service of their country. She was posthumously awarded the American Campaign Medal and the World War II Victory Medal.

**See also:** aircraft workers; Avenger Field; British women; Civil Air Patrol; Cochran, Jacqueline; decorations; European Theater of Operations; Love, Nancy Harkness; Pearl Harbor; sexual harassment; Women's Airforce Service Pilots; Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron

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## FRENCH WOMEN/AMERICAN WOMEN IN FRANCE

Compared with other European immigrants (especially German Americans and Italian Americans, some of whom were treated as enemy aliens during World War II), French Americans always have been rare. When France lost what Americans call the French & Indian War in 1763, French-speakers isolated themselves in Quebec or Louisiana. A second factor in limiting immigration from France was Napoleon's warfare during the early nineteenth century: so many men were killed that the population remained relatively small, and because there was no overcrowding, few French people were motivated to leave.

World War I also had a devastating effect on France, and when World War II followed two decades later, it did not put up much of a fight: Holland and Belgium fell in late May 1940, and the first Germans entered Paris on June 14. Some high-ranking Frenchmen supported the fascism of Germany's Hitler and Italy's Mussolini, and, because France was surrounded by those nations and by conquered or neutralized countries, it seemed futile to resist. The Free French govern-

ment led by Charles de Gaulle went into exile in Britain, while the Nazis set up a puppet government at Vichy, a town approximately halfway between Paris and the Mediterranean port city of Marseilles. That right-wing government cooperated with Germany in exporting French Jews, labor union leaders, lesbians, and other leftist women to concentration camps in eastern Europe.

Especially early in the occupation, Nazis tried to convince French families that the takeover was a good thing: one propaganda poster, for example, featured a happy young mother and her daughter who rejoiced, "The bad days are over! Papa is earning money in Germany." Another showed a blond uniformed soldier holding a laughing boy in his arms, and read, "*Populations abandonnees, faites confiance au Soldat Allemand!*," or "refugees trust German soldiers." With the cooperation of the Vichy government, people on their way to death camps were cruelly deceived by the slogan of another: "When you work in Germany, you will be the ambassador of French workmanship."

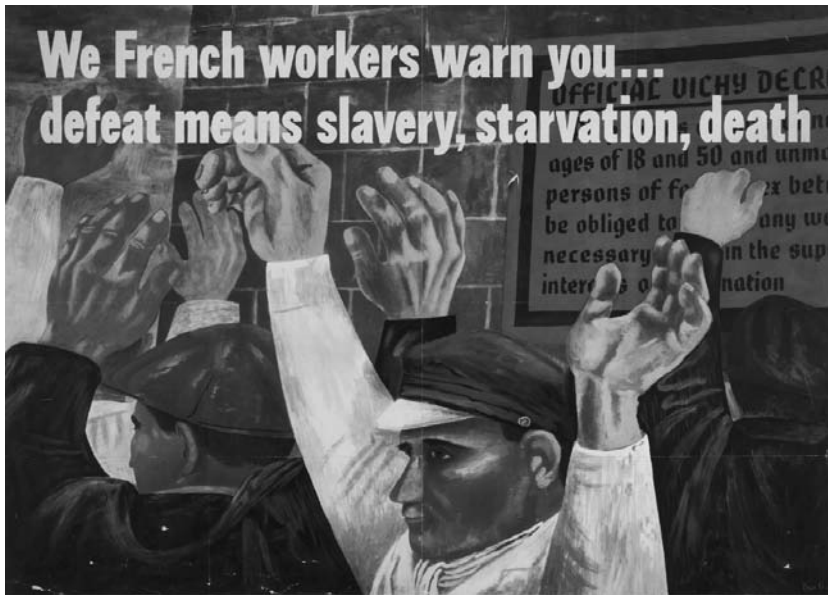
French women did not win the vote during the World War I era, as did women in Britain and the United States, and French law had been strongly discriminatory against women since the Napoleonic Code. Nonetheless, few women visibly supported the fascists and many found the courage and resources to join the French Resistance. They risked their lives in guerilla warfare against occupation soldiers. Some blew up bridges as German trains passed over them; others spied on Vichy officials and surreptitiously radioed out vital information to listening posts in Britain.

And they were arrested and tortured and killed. In September 1944, just weeks after Paris was liberated, *Collier's* correspondent Martha Gellhorn wrote of the evidence of horrifying torture chambers. Tunnels below Paris long had carried the city's sewage, and she said, "the Germans invented the subhuman idea of using these tunnels as a prison":

They locked men and women there in the wet unending dark until they died, or until it was time to torture or shoot them ... Men and women were shut in, without blankets or light ... as long as their bodies could endure ... There is no refuse which would show that the prisoners had food ... There is nothing except. .. the badly written names of people now dead ...

At Romainville ... is a sort of shack ... the Germans used to disinfect clothing ... in boxes ... lined with metal ... The Germans then thought it would be a good idea to put humans into these boxes and literally burn them alive. It would take quite a while to die in those closed metal-lined boxes ... And after you had been burned enough you would be brought out, cared for, questioned, and if recalcitrant, put back in the box ...

Torture chambers existed anywhere, in an average house on any street ... On the walls of this room people have left messages written with stubs of pencil. The handwriting is not often educated ... They are terrible simple messages from people who know they will die but do not know how much longer it will take ... There were messages of courage, saying, "Comrades, tell nothing, vive la France, vive la Liberte."



Posters such as this aimed to encourage American women to support the war against Germany by showing what life was like for the defeated French. Note the decree in the background on mandatory evacuation for what turned out to be slave labor. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

Both because of the occupation's harsh censorship and because of differing languages, much more was written in the American media about British women than about French women. *Independent Woman*, the publication of Business & Professional Women (BPW), however, issued an article about women in the French underground in January of 1944, six months prior to D-Day. After that June 6th beginning of the liberation of France, other magazines also featured stories about French women, including work by well-respected Doris Fleeson. In general, however, both before and after D-Day, American women could read dozens of articles on British women compared with perhaps one about French women.

Alice-Leone Moats therefore was highly exceptional in writing an entire book about occupied France. Educated at a South Carolina finishing school, she was an independently-wealthy freelance journalist fluent in five languages. She traveled and wrote about the entire globe, including going to wartime Russia and on to southeast Asia for *Collier's*. After a brief break in the United States, Moats returned to Europe in April 1944, arriving in neutral Spain. She paid \$3,000 for guides to walk her across the Pyrenees Mountains, and, with help from the French underground, even visited occupied Paris. After returning to the United States via neutral Portugal, she wrote *No Passport for Paris*.

While Moats hid her American connections, another, much more famous, American woman successfully ignored the Gestapo for the entire war. Novelist Gertrude Stein had lived in France so long and was such an international celebrity that the Nazis never harassed her or her lover, Alice Toklas. Both a Jew and a lesbian, Stein not only did not go into hiding, but even continued to publish during the war. At its end, she wrote perhaps the most straightforward of her often-obscure books, *Wars I Have Known* (1945). It was her last; she died of cancer the next year.

Stein and other Americans had often gathered at Shake-

spare & Co., an English-language bookstore in the shadow of Notre Dame that Baltimore-born Sylvia Beach opened in 1919. She closed it when the Nazis took over and hid the books rather than risk their confiscation and burning—something that the Gestapo had done elsewhere. Despite these precautions, Beach was arrested and spent seven months of 1943 in prison.

Another Baltimore native who lived in Paris was Wallis Simpson, for whom Britain's King Edward VIII abdicated the throne in 1936. Much different from Sylvia Beach in political views, the Duchess of Windsor befriended Nazis in the prewar era—something that further increased the dislike most Britons had for her. The Duke and Duchess were at their summer home in the south of France when the Germans invaded Paris, and they escaped to Spain. They wanted to go to London, but the British government refused permission, and on August 1, 1940, they sailed for Bermuda. The Windsors lived out the war there, far from both potential collaborators and potential kidnappers, and returned to Paris as soon as that was possible.

The beginning of the end of German occupation of France finally came on June 6, 1944, when Allied troops invaded the Normandy coast and launched the northern portion of the European Theater of Operations (ETO). A few months earlier, in February 1944, *Collier's* correspondent Martha Gellhorn wrote of French fighters—including women—who joined the Allies as they pushed their way up the Italian peninsula. "The French," she said "are earning their way home and they do not complain. They know exactly what they are doing and they are doing it superbly. They are fighting for the honor of France ..., a personal, undying pride in every one of them." By June, Gellhorn had circled around the Mediterranean and Atlantic to England, and she sneaked aboard the very first hospital ship of the D-Day invasion. Then she wrote of the things that wounded soldiers had to say about their brief experience in France:

They were all baffled by the French and surprised by how much food there was in Normandy, forgetting that Normandy is one of the great food-producing areas of France. They thought the girls in the villages were amazingly well dressed. Everything was confused and astounding: first there were the deadly bleak beaches and then the villages where they were greeted with flowers and cookies and often snipers and booby traps ... Two men who thought they were being volubly invited into an old woman's house to eat dinner were actually being warned of snipers in the attic.

This difficulty of telling friend from foe would continue. When Germans recovered from the shock of the invasion, a rejuvenated Gestapo strengthened its hunt for covert Allies and especially OSS members. Late in the summer, according to McIntosh, American official David Bruce wrote in his diary: "We have overrun here one of the ... agents, a woman, who had been parachuted [into France]. Her companion was captured by the Gestapo on July 31 and was tortured in the most horrible manner before he died."

More than two months passed between D-Day and the liberation of Paris, during which especially nurses worked very hard under difficult conditions. Letters collectors Litoff and Smith, for instance, include the story of the Normandy invasion as recounted by Ruth Hess:

For nine days we never stopped. 880 patients operated ... gun shots and shrapnel wounds, numerous amputations ... Numerous French [patients] ... We sent out surgical teams to a German hospital that had been captured ... All the work they did was dirty surgery—every one was covered with pus, gangrene, bed sores, and filth—absolutely skin and bones ...

Another ANC woman, Aileen Hogan, wrote as her unit moved south in August:

It is not pleasant riding in France—nothing but devastation—forests leafless, limbless, just straight stark trees—roads all under construction—platoon bridges over rivers. And along the roads French people—very old women with maybe a small child or two and a few clothes in a wheelbarrow, making their slow way back to their homes ...

Our blockbusters [bombs] are something I hope you never hear. I do not know how these people stand up against it. And in the midst of it all you see a two and three year old child.

I have a young woman in the ward. The village was warned to take to the fields but she couldn't find one of the children and by the time she and her husband and five children got started so had our bombers. She saw her husband with the baby fell flat on the road, what happened to the others she does not know. She was the only one the advancing troops found. This is only a small incident compared to the agony of these people ...

Hogan wrote that letter on August 22, and on August 25, the Germans retreated from Paris. According to author Julia Edwards, Lee Carson of the International News Service "rolled through the St.-Cloud gate into Paris the evening of August 24, behind the tanks but before the Germans

had checked out." Sonia Tomara of the *New York Herald Tribune* arrived "on a weapons carrier," while Ruth Cowan of the Associated Press came "under fire" on the first train. Paris exploded into wild celebration. A number of American women wrote about that, too, including Red Cross employee Alice Niestockel, who told author Olga Gruhzt-Hoyt that "the crowds were crazy ... kissing the GIs." Martha Gellhorn's story for *Collier's* spoke of the ironic contrasts of post-liberation Parisian life: "You can buy as many orchids as your heart desires in the great market of the Halles, but you could not buy a pound of coal ... In fact, you could more easily take a bath in champagne than in hot water."

Soon after Paris was free, perhaps the single best-known unit of American women arrived there. This was the 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion, the first group of African-American army women to go overseas. Under the command of Charity Adams, they set speed records at sorting mail to Americans, and they would march in the final victory parade at the war's end. U.S. Representative Frances Bolton also arrived a few days after liberation; she wanted to check on the condition of hard-working nurses whose cause she championed in Congress.

Before the rest of France could join Paris in celebration, however, there would be much tough fighting as American and British forces slowly forced German troops east and south. Although Free French soldiers fought with the Allies, many Vichy supporters continued to align themselves with the Nazis—and it was hard for Allies to tell the difference. Dangers continued all through the autumn and winter, one of the coldest on record. Gertrude Pearson Casetta, one of five hundred WACs who arrived just after Liberation Day, told Olga Gruhzt-Hoyt of her experience in the eastern town of Vittel:

We could clearly hear the artillery guns ... fighting was still going on in the mountains and hills around us ... There were spies in Vittel ... One night we heard gunshots ... the guards had shot an enemy agent. Another time, a female agent arrived ... looking for a place to stay. She said she was a member of a British organization ..., but I noticed her shoes did not look British ... The woman's room was searched and she was subsequently taken away by the military police.

One of the larger hotels became ... [a] hospital ... for days on end during the Battle of the Bulge train after train pulled in ... Medics unloaded the soldiers on their litters to the platform, where they waited in long lines to be placed in one of the never-ending fleets of ambulances. It was bitterly cold and some had no blankets ... I saw this when I went to the hospital to donate blood ...

Christmas of 1944 was somber, but by the following February, Allies reached the Rhine and all of France was free. The war continued in Germany through the spring, with Hitler's suicide on April 30 and VE Day, or Victory in Europe, following on May 8th, when Germany unconditionally surrendered. Another huge celebration took place in Paris, with many American women, including African Americans, proudly marching through the Arc d'Triomphe.



France, which had issued decorations to American women for their services in World War I, again was generous. Among the American women who received its Legion of Honor were Congresswoman Frances Bolton and Helen Kirkpatrick of the *Chicago Daily News*. Therese Bonney, who ran a Paris news service, had received that medal earlier, after World War I; for this war, the French government gave her its extremely prestigious *Croix de Guerre*.

Margaret Bourke-White of *Life* is the American journalist most associated with the liberation of Nazi concentration camps, but Janet Flanner of the *New Yorker* wrote one of the most poignant pieces of the entire human tragedy on that. She lived in Paris and published under the pseudonym of "Genet." According to author Nancy Caldwell Sorel, Flanner "went to a Paris train station to report the arrival of three hundred Frenchwomen from the camp at Ravensbruck." They were the healthiest of survivors, but even so, eleven women died between Berlin and Paris. On an ironically spring day, the "nearly silent crowd" carried lilacs to greet the women, some of whom were so changed that their husbands did not recognize them. Flanner continued:

There was a general, anguished babble of search, of finding or not finding. There was almost no joy ... too much suffering lay behind this homecoming. One matron six years ago renowned in Paris for her elegance, had become a bent, dazed shabby old woman ... When her smartly attired brother, who met her, said, like an automaton, "Where is your luggage?" she silently handed him what looked like a dirty black sweater fastened with safety pins around whatever small belongings were rolled inside.

*See also:* Adams, Charity; African-American women; Army Nurse Corps; Bolton, Frances; Bonney, Therese; British women; Business & Professional Women; correspondents, war; D-Day; decorations; European Theater of Operations; enemy aliens; Gellhorn, Martha; Hall, Virginia; Kirkpatrick, Helen; magazines; posters; prisoners of war; V-E Day; Women's Army Corps

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## **GARDENER, JULIA ANN (1882–1960)**

Julia Ann Gardener rendered exceptional service to the World War II military through her detailed knowledge of geology. Her understanding of rocks was so complete that, for example, she could examine the sand used as ballast for Japanese incendiary balloons and tell from what beach in Japan it had originated.

Her educational background provides an excellent example of the networks that women developed in the second half of the nineteenth century, when large numbers of colleges first opened to female students. She studied under a pioneer female scientist, Florence Bascom, who earned the first doctorate that Johns Hopkins University granted to a woman in 1893. Bascom's mother, in turn, was a Wisconsin suffrage leader, and Johns Hopkins offered women exceptional opportunity because Baltimore philanthropist Mary Garrett insisted upon it. After earning her doctorate, Bascom taught at Pennsylvania's Bryn Mawr College, a prestigious single-sex institution founded by other women. One of Bascom's students there was Julia Ann Gardner.

Born in the Dakota Territory, Gardner's father was a physician who died just months later. Her mother, a school teacher, returned East when Julia Ann was in her teens so that she could have better educational opportunities than those in still-frontier Chamberlain, South Dakota. After graduation from a private Massachusetts academy (the equivalent of high school), she enrolled at Bryn Mawr in 1901. She developed a profound interest in geology and paleontology—but found no opportunities after earning her B.A. beyond the stereotypical one of teaching. She returned to South Dakota, taught for two years, saved her money, and went back to Bryn Mawr for graduate work. With vari-

ous grants, including from the United States Geographical Survey (USGS), she earned her Ph.D. in 1911.

Dr. Gardner moved to Washington, D.C., in 1915 and would be associated with the USGS for the rest of her life—except for the period of World War I, when she volunteered as a nurse. The United States entered that war in April, and within days of her mother's death in October, Gardener was on her way to France. She served under the aegis of both the Red Cross and the American Friends Service Committee (Quakers), often near the front. She stayed on for most of two years after the war ending with an armistice on November 11, 1918, and suffered a service-related accident near Rheims in 1919.

Returning to the USGS in 1920, Gardener did field work throughout the nation, including important development of Texas oil fields that would be fundamental to an increasingly automobile-based economy. She also traveled globally, and when the USGS created a Military Geology Unit when World War II began, she was eager to serve. After the sneak attack at Pearl Harbor, people on the West Coast were terrified of a similar attack—and the Japanese did, in fact, launch balloons that were intended to set fires to forests. At least a thousand such balloons reached the West Coast, with parts found from Alaska to Mexico and inland as far as Montana. A woman, Elsie Mitchell, and the five young people she had taken on a picnic were killed in May 1945, when one of these balloons exploded in a forest near Bly, Oregon.

Sailors and others had been picking up parts of the experimental balloons since the previous November, and it was then that Dr. Gardner demonstrated her valuable geographical knowledge. There were just five beaches in Japan that featured the particular type of sand used as ballast for the

thirty-three-foot balloons, and reconnaissance planes soon checked out those beaches. Because of her ability to pinpoint possible locations, American pilots took photographs of the plant that was producing the balloons within days of finding the first one.

After the war, she served as a civilian employee of the occupation forces; again, she mapped geological resources in the Pacific. Gardener was elected to top offices in her academic associations and received the Interior Department's Distinguished Service Award in 1952.

**See also:** civil defense; Davis, Fanny-Fern; enemy aliens; Gerry, Eloise; nurses; Pacific Theater of Operations; Red Cross; scientific research and development

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### GELLHORN, MARTHA (1908–1998)

Martha Gellhorn's ninety-year life was much more than the five years that she spent as the third of novelist Ernest Hemingway's four wives—but those years were 1940–45, exactly the same as World War II. She was much more than Hemingway's wife, however: Gellhorn was an outstandingly courageous war correspondent both before and after World War II, and her day-to-day journalistic style has the literary grace of Hemingway's novels. Nor was journalism her only genre. Gellhorn also published plays, more than a dozen novels and novellas, and many short stories, one of which won the prestigious O. Henry Award. Among other non-fiction, she wrote the introduction to a book compilation of the "My Day" columns by her friend Eleanor Roosevelt.

Born in St. Louis to a relatively affluent family, Gellhorn enrolled in Pennsylvania's elite Bryn Mawr College but did not graduate. She was eager to see the world and to write about it, and her ability was so evident that she began her career with such periodicals as the highly intellectual *New Republic*. Like many young Americans of that era, she lived in France and was briefly married to a Frenchman, while also writing for the *St. Louis Post Dispatch* and the United Press syndicate. Her first novel, published in 1934, reflected this phase of her life.

After returning to the United States, she worked briefly for the Federal Writers Project that was part of the New Deal that coped with the Great Depression. The result was an empathetic look at unemployment, *The Trouble I've Seen* (1936), which was deemed worthy of an introduction by

famed H.G. Wells. That same year, she met Hemingway for the first time in Key West. He lived there with his second wife; her Arkansas landowning family had provided the initial funds that supported their comfortable lifestyle. Hemingway was immediately smitten by Gellhorn's blonde hair and long legs, as well as her adventurous spirit.

They met again in Spain the next year, where she went to report on the July outbreak of the Spanish Civil War for *Collier's*, a widely-read magazine of that era. Gellhorn's association with *Collier's*, however, would last longer than that with Hemingway—and the Spanish Civil War would shape her political views for the rest of her life. This conflict, with its terrorism of civilians, presaged what would happen to the rest of Europe in the 1940s. Aided by Germany's Adolf Hitler, fascists under Generalissimo Francisco Franco turned Spain into a police state, while Americans ignored appeals from Spanish democrats and those who supported them.

After Franco won early in 1939, Gellhorn went on to report on similar victimization in Prague, where refugees fled from Hitler's right-wing dictatorship, and in Helsinki, where Finns endured left-wing tyranny by the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin. These scenarios would form the basis of novels that Gellhorn published in 1940 and 1941. World War II officially began in September 1939, when Germany attacked Poland, and Gellhorn joined Hemingway in Havana.

He found it more difficult to divorce than he had expected, and they did not marry until November 1940—the same year that he published *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, in which he modeled the female protagonist on Gellhorn. The wedding was in Wyoming—presaging Hemingway's eventual move from his longtime subtropical base—and photographs of it were featured in *Life*. Their relationship, however, began to deteriorate almost as soon as the vows were spoken.

While the United States remained neutral in 1941, *Collier's* sent Gellhorn to write about Japan's ongoing attack on China. Her husband joined her on the trip, but was disconcerted by both the discomfort of Asian travel and by Gellhorn's superior status as the authorized journalist—so much so that she termed him "UC," for "Unwilling Companion." Even more disillusioning were the conclusions that she drew about the corrupt indifference of United States ally Chiang Kai-Shek, the unelected president of Nationalist China and his American-educated wife, Madame Chiang. Gellhorn predicted that the Nationalists would lose China's civil war almost a decade before that, in fact, happened. "I felt it was pure doom to be Chinese," she said. "No worse luck could befall a human being than to be born and live there."

The couple was back in the Western Hemisphere by December; they learned about Pearl Harbor in a Mexican bar. Then, Gellhorn said:

Between that time and November 1943, when I finally reached England (filled with joy to be there, to be home in the world again), I was paralyzed by conflicting emotions: private duty, public disgust and a longing to forget both and join those who were suffering the war. It is too hard to sit on the outside and watch what you can neither help nor change;



it is far easier to close your eyes and your mind and jump into the general misery, where you have almost no choices left, but a lot of splendid company.

Leaving her husband to his ostensible leadership of Cuban fishermen who would defend that island from attack, she went on to cover the European Theater of Operation. Gellhorn worked that monumental story from the Italian peninsular campaign to D-Day and on through the war's end, when she broke the story of the Dachau concentration camp. Her fluency in several languages enabled her to get stories straight from affected civilians, as well as from soldiers of other nationalities. When she traveled with a Polish corps in Italy, for example, she quoted her driver as replying to a question with: "'Nossing. Tres ennuyeux pour vous. Sie haben nichts gesehen.' The use of three scrambled languages," said Gellhorn, "was our regular communication system. Everyone understood everyone else perfectly."

She endured all the hardships of soldiers, sleeping on the ground and eating cold rations and always writing about the hard fight from the point of view of ordinary people. Millions of American readers, both men and women, learned the details of Europe's great tragedy from her. Somehow, in the midst of all this, Gellhorn found time to publish a novel featuring a mixed-race Caribbean woman, *Liana* (1944). At the end of that terrible year, she was with soldiers in the bitter cold and snow of the Battle of the Bulge, and she wrote: "I thought of a wonderful New Year's resolution for the men who run the world: get to know the people in it."

Hemingway caught up with her near the war's end in London—just in time to meet Mary Welsh, an attractive, petite broadcaster for BBC and war correspondent for several periodicals. She was married to an Australian journalist when they met, but Gellhorn was glad to give Hemingway a 1945 divorce, and he married Welsh in 1946. As Mary Hemingway, she would live with him until his 1961 suicide at their Idaho home.

Gellhorn stayed on in postwar Europe and adopted a boy from an Italian orphanage in 1949. A decade later, she would dedicate a compilation of her wartime *Collier's* articles, *The Face of War* (1959), to "my son Sandy." Because so many refugees wanted to enter the United States, they lived in Mexico, and there she had the longest of her three marriages, from 1954–1963. During that time, Gellhorn also won the O. Henry Award, the most sought-after honor for short stories. It was awarded in 1958 for "In Sickness and In Health," which was published by *Atlantic Monthly*.

Aging did not slow her. After Mexico, she lived in Kenya and wrote on Africa during its crucial transformation from European colonies to independent nations. She covered the Arab-Israeli conflict and the Vietnam war of the late 1960s and early 1970s, and she visited the Soviet Union in 1972. Gellhorn published her last book, *The View from the Ground* (1988), and did her final reporting at eighty-one from Panama, when the first Bush administration removed former ally Manuel Noriega from office in a "war" that centered on drug money, with rock music used as a weapon.

After a long life filled with vibrant writing on events ranging from the most cynically disillusioning to the greatest idealism, Gellhorn died at ninety in London—which had been her home a half-century earlier during World War II.

*See also:* **British women; Chiang Kai-shek, Madame; correspondents, war; D-Day; European Theater of Operations; Pearl Harbor; prisoners of war; refugees; Roosevelt, Eleanor**

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### GERRY, ELOISE (1885–1970)

Just as geologist Julia Ann Gardner could determine from what beach in Japan a barrage balloon likely was launched, Eloise Gerry was such an expert in wood that she could examine pieces of a sunken ship and identify its probable forest origin.

She earned her bachelor's and master's degrees at Radcliffe College, the female affiliate of Harvard, which then had been extant only about two decades—while Harvard was nearly three centuries old. Gender remained a huge barrier in both education and occupation, and Gerry said of the 1910 beginning of her career as a federal employee: the "Forest Service did not want a woman, but as it happened there wasn't any man willing to come and do the work."

At age twenty-five, she moved to the new US Forest Products Laboratory at Madison, Wisconsin, and worked from that base for the rest of her life. She reported to work on the first day the facility opened, and her first job was to collect samples of wood from all over the United States for laboratory study. Over objections from those that thought Southern pinewoods were not a proper place for women, she went in 1916 to Mississippi and studied turpentine harvesting techniques. The eventual result was, as she said, "more turpentine, less scar, better pine." Both turpentine and wood, of course, are fundamental to shipbuilding, and Gerry also worked on improved naval stores for World War I ships.

The University of Wisconsin awarded her doctorate in 1921 for her microscopic study of pine tissue, and she spent the rest of that decade expanding her knowledge and the laboratory's collection worldwide. She soon was recognized as an expert in foreign wood, and according to the Forest History Society, a 1936 newspaper story called Dr. Gerry "the

only woman scientist in her field in the world.” This expertise was valuable in World War II, when Gerry was capable of identifying the origins of wood in enemy ships and planes; armed with that knowledge, the military knew which forests to target for the greatest disruption of Axis production.

Dr. Gerry wrote more than one hundred and twenty academic articles and some forty technical books published by the U.S. Forest Service or one of its affiliates, the most general of which was a bibliography titled *Plants and the Moon* (1952). She also was an early member of Graduate Women in Science—and wrote stories for children. She retired in 1954, after more than four decades with the U.S. Forest Service, and still had time prior to her 1970 death to enjoy dogs and gardening. Many fellowships and grants for women in science now are endowed in her name. Writer David Havlick said that at her funeral, a colleague observed that she “made a life pattern from the living forest that gives and gives, yet seeks nothing in return.”

*See also:* **Davis, Fanny-Fern; Gardener, Julia; scientific research and development; shipbuilding industry**

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## G.I. BILL OF RIGHTS

The G.I. Bill of Rights is to the twentieth century what the Homestead Act was to the nineteenth century: the single most important piece of legislation for economy equality. Both acts offered unprecedented opportunity, especially for young Americans. Just as the Homestead Act provided free land to anyone willing to settle on it, the World War II legislation offered free educations to veterans who could demonstrate their college aptitude, as well as housing loans and other benefits. Female homesteaders could—but seldom did—take advantage of the nineteenth-century act, and unfortunately, the same was true of female veterans and the G.I. Bill.

Although some early publicity referred to the bill—which also created the Veterans Administration (VA)—as entitlements for “GI Joe and Jane,” by the time that the act was passed and implemented, Jane was largely forgotten. As women were demobilized from the military, they theoretically were briefed on the benefits to which they were entitled—but most female veterans nonetheless seemed unaware that the G.I. Bill applied to WACs, WAVES, members of the nursing corps, etc. Few sought its benefits, and decades later, when the VA finally began collecting data on female veterans in the 1970s and 1980s, many women would aver that they had wanted to go to college and did not understand that their government would have paid for it. Presumably they were so

accustomed to an auxiliary or quasi-military status that the possibility of equality in this area never occurred to them.

This attitude was reinforced by the usage of “G.I.” (or, more commonly, “GI”) to refer to male, usually combat, soldiers. The term predated World War II and has its origins in the phrase “government issue.” Supplies to soldiers on the early western frontier, for example, were stamped “government issue,” and in the 1940s, the media adopted that term for the ordinary soldier. The GI Bill, of course, applied to much more than this theoretical infantryman, and male veterans certainly understood that its benefits were available to both officers and enlisted men in all branches of the U.S. military, including the Navy and the Marines, as well as the Army and its affiliated Air Force.

The legislation’s formal name additionally confirmed the erroneous notion that it applied only to male veterans: when President Franklin Roosevelt signed it on June 22, 1944, it was officially the “Servicemen’s Readjustment Act.” All of these factors combined to mean that instead of benefiting female veterans, the GI Bill ended up being much more important to the much larger number of American women married to male veterans. Albeit vicariously, the legislation fundamentally changed the lifestyles of many women who never expected to be the wife of a college graduate or to have ownership in a home paid for with a mortgage backed by the federal government.

By the end of 1946, some two million veterans were enrolled in colleges and universities with their expenses paid by a grateful nation. The government did not take note of how many women were in this number, but according to writer Nancy McInerney, there were some three thousand female applicants for GI Bill college benefits in the New York City area. She added ominously, however, that “not all of these who want to go will be able to get into the overcrowded colleges and universities.” A few universities, including New Jersey’s Rutgers, developed special programs for female veterans, but *Time* called the situation correctly when it said, “there has been much ado about the postwar schooling of G.I. Joes, but very little about ... G.I. Janes.”

Nor did female academic leaders—such as Mildred McAfee and Virginia Gildersleeve, who were founders of the WAVES as well as presidents of elite women’s colleges—offer as much leadership as they could have. They appeared to prefer retain the sheltered atmosphere of single-sex institutions, seemingly unwilling to expose the protected daughters of the wealthy to the rougher, more experienced female veteran.

That was much less true for the majority of GI Bill recipients, the male veterans who crowded postwar classrooms. The legislation did not restrict them to a set amount of money; instead, it covered tuition at whatever college admitted the student. The result was a democratization of institutions previously dominated by the upper class. Colleges such as Harvard and Yale were revolutionized by these serious-minded, mature students. Professors generally were delighted, as these men offered a great contrast to many spoiled sons of the rich

who had occupied campuses during the previous decade of the Great Depression. The GI Bill thus profoundly changed the nature of higher education.

Especially public colleges quickly built married-student housing, and countless women spent their days cooking, cleaning, and caring for babies in one-room, campus-based apartments. Few took classes themselves—and at many schools, even well-qualified, unmarried female students were squeezed out of classrooms by the large numbers of veterans. Some colleges refused to admit female students at all in the immediate postwar years, and some public institutions that had been reserved for women became gender integrated when their administrators saw the dollars available through the GI Bill. Florida State College for Women, for example, became Florida State University because of this.

Because building materials were diverted to military uses during the war, housing had been extremely scarce—and the other great impact of the GI Bill was to create a huge boom in that area. Middle-class families who rented their homes became much less common in the 1950s than in the 1930s because the GI Bill guaranteed mortgages for veterans. Just as colleges benefited from its dollars, so did banks and credit unions, as well as the construction industry: the government ensured that these businesses would take no loss if a veteran defaulted on his home loan. Women indirectly benefited, too, as most ultimately inherited the house that had been paid for with these low-interest mortgages. Other veterans used their benefits to establish businesses, and their families also indirectly benefited if the business succeeded.

This major change—on which much of the modern economy is arguably based—also is to the credit of some congresswomen. Senator Hattie Caraway of Arkansas had been an advocate for World War I veterans, and New Jersey's Mary T. Norton held especially strong influence as chair of the House Labor Committee. Labor unions not only had a historical record of supporting education, but were especially supportive of the GI Bill because it would lessen competition for jobs by taking some veterans off the job market when they instead went to school. Unions in the building trades had a particular interest in the housing benefits offered by the bill. Both women were Democrats, but the GI Bill was largely non-partisan: leading Republican women, including Ohio's Frances Bolton, Massachusetts' Edith Nourse Rogers, and Maine's Margaret Chase Smith, also supported it.

Under President Harry Truman, the legislation was updated for the Korean War and remained a strong underpin of expanded opportunity through the following decades. Millions of Americans have based their personal fortunes on the largess of the federal government through the GI Bill of Rights.

*See also:* **benefits, colleges; Bolton, Frances; Caraway, Hattie; demobilization; Gildersleeve, Virginia; housing; males, comparisons with; McAfee, Mildred; Norton, Mary; Rogers, Edith Nourse; Smith, Margaret Chase; wives of servicemen**

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## GILDERSLEEVE, VIRGINIA CROCHERON (1877–1965)

The only female delegate to the February 1945 planning conference for creation of the United Nations, Gildersleeve had headed prestigious Barnard College since 1911.

She was an unmarried New Yorker all her life, and her middle name reflected her mother's French heritage; her paternal family dated to Dutch colonial settlement, and her father was a justice of the New York Supreme Court. Education was valued in their Manhattan household, and after private schooling, she entered Barnard College in 1895—when the college, an affiliate of Columbia University—was just six years old.

Barnard, founded in 1889, was the last of the "Seven Sister" schools that were female auxiliaries to the male colleges of the Ivy League. The longtime discrimination against female students by these elite northeastern institutions becomes even more clear when it is recognized that Columbia originally was "King's College;" its name changed with the American Revolution.

Although the last of the Seven Sisters, Barnard moved more quickly than others in integrating its faculty and resources, with the result that Gildersleeve studied under eminent Columbia professors. She earned her 1899 bachelor's degree from Barnard, but her 1900 master's and 1908 doctorate were awarded by Columbia; all degrees were in history or literature. Her thesis on English governmental regulation of Elizabethan drama has been widely reprinted.

Dr. Gildersleeve rejected an offer of higher academic rank from the University of Wisconsin to stay in New York as a mere lecturer—but just three years later, when Barnard's dean died, she was appointed as its top official. While maintaining the school's rigorous standards, she also implemented such progressive policies as paid maternity leave for faculty, and she constantly pressed Columbia for greater female access to its graduate schools. According to Eleanor Roosevelt, Gildersleeve "marched in the suffrage parades" when that



took appreciable courage—and when Roosevelt herself was not yet a visible supporter of women's right to vote. Gildersleeve's early interest in international issues also was evident with the publication of her 1918 speech in Chicago, "The Relationship of Nations: An Address Delivered at the Congress ... of the National Security League."

Her World War II importance began in 1942, when Gildersleeve chaired the advisory committee for the U.S. Navy's new female unit, the WAVES. According to historians Jean Ebbert and Marie-Beth Hall, "the Navy's initial move in consulting Dr. Gildersleeve turned out to be brilliant, for through her it was able to engage some of the most talented women in America." One of them was Mildred McAfee, president of Massachusetts' Wellesley College, who accepted the command of the wartime WAVES. Additional female networking can be seen in the fact that Massachusetts' Smith College also provided the first officer training school for WAVES, while the major training center for enlisted WAVES was established at New York's Hunter College—a more plebeian institution, however, than Gildersleeve's Barnard. Through Barnard's resources, Gildersleeve issued a booklet, *Educating Girls for the War and the Post-War World* (1943).

Her leadership abilities were sufficiently known to fellow New Yorker Franklin Roosevelt that he appointed her to the initial conference for planning the United Nations. She considered this San Francisco gathering to be the high point of her life and took a strong role in drafting the UN charter. She was the only woman in the official eight-member U.S. delegation, but hundreds of other women participated in this weeks-long effort to structure a form of world governance. The public was extremely interested, and according to historian Dorothy Robins, Gildersleeve wrote: "Never before had a great international conference considering matters of the gravest import taken place in such a blinding blaze of publicity." She worked particularly hard for inclusion of education as a human right.

Gildersleeve became a strong advocate for peace, writing in *Woman's Home Companion* of her belief that female political participation was essential to international harmony. "Women have generally a stronger instinct for creating and preserving life," she said. "War, with its destruction of life ... they instinctively hate." Practicing what she preached, she went to postwar Asia as a member of the U.S. Educational Mission to Japan, where she worked to make educational access more democratic and especially more open to girls and women. Her greatest concern was human rights, including women's rights, and with her friend Eleanor Roosevelt as chair of UN's Human Rights Committee, Gildersleeve saw the formal adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights on December 10, 1948.

She had retired by then, however, leaving Barnard in 1947. She published an autobiography, *Many a Good Crusade* (1954), and followed that with an essay collection, *A Hoard for Winter* (1962). She received several honorary degrees, and the American Association of University Women, in which she was long active, established an international scholarship fund

named for her in 1969. Her greatest award, however, was that of the French government, which granted her its Legion of Honor for her service with the WAVES, the United Nations, and especially in postwar Japan.

**See also:** **Bethune, Mary McLeod; colleges; decorations; McAfee, Mildred; occupied Japan; Roosevelt, Eleanor; United Nations; WAVES**

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## GLASER, ERICA (1922–1994)

Because her father, a physician, also was half-Jewish, Erica Glaser's childhood in eastern Germany was burdened with "physical and mental harassment ... by schoolmates and teachers." In a late-life interview with author Elizabeth P. McIntosh, she summarized "the war years" as having "vivid but devastating memories."

Teenage Erica joined her idealistic parents in the Spanish Civil War of the late 1930s, which proved a preview of what would happen to the rest of Europe as free speech and other civil rights fell to fascism. When Francisco Franco—with help from Hitler's Germany—defeated Spain's democratic forces, Erica's parents fled to England; they left her in neutral Switzerland with friends Herta and Noel Field. She graduated from the University of Geneva in 1944, and because of her foster father's contacts, immediately was recruited by the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the spy agency that was the forerunner of today's CIA.

The young college graduate was fluent in German, Spanish, French, and English, and she already had experience helping the Fields smuggle Hitler's potential victims into the safety of Switzerland. According to McIntosh, they worked "with a variety of undercover agents in Germany: communists, unionists, religious groups" that opposed the Nazi government. Officially employed as a stereotypical "secretary," Glaser had no secretarial skills: it was her linguistic ability that made her a valuable employee; she garnered valuable information about conditions in Germany from refugees and prisoners of war. Historian R. Harris Smith added that in

autumn of 1944, “when OSS infiltration of Germany became of supreme importance, [Noel] Field’s left-wing comrades ... proved most useful.” Among them was “24-year-old Erika Glaser, a German-Jewish refugee whom the Fields had met in Spain.” She became, he said, an OSS “secretary-interpreter ... while still a member of the Swiss Communist underground youth movement.”

After the European war ended with V-E Day in May 1945, Glaser moved from Bern to Berlin, where the OSS assigned her to interrogate prisoners of war from the Soviet Union. She also reestablished connections with leftists, something that followed up on the idealism she had shown in fighting the enemies of communists both in the Spanish Civil War and World War II—and something also may have been part of her job, as, according to Smith, the Berlin OSS office “sought to establish communication with the Communist labor movement.” The unfortunate result, however, eventually became that neither side of the Cold War between the United States and its former ally, the Soviet Union, would completely trust her. Harris concluded by saying that although “Miss Glaser [was] a ‘comrade’ of long-standing ..., the doctrinaire Marxists were so suspicious that they refused to allow her to join the party until she severed all connections with the American secret service.”

If Glaser’s professional life was frustrating, her personal life took a happy turn when she met and married army officer Robert Wallach, whose family was prominent in Washington, D.C. The couple lived in Paris and had two children, while waiting for the U.S. State Department to approve her admission to the United States. Yet, despite the fact that she had been employed by an American agency, and despite the fact that the War Brides Act should have granted automatic admission, her association with communists made Erica Wallach suspicious in the conservative postwar era.

The situation worsened in 1949, when her foster parents disappeared from Prague. Fearful that the Fields had been kidnapped by Soviet agents, she flew to Berlin, where she was lured into the Soviet sector of that divided city and arrested. She spent the next five years in a slave labor camp in Siberia, being released after the 1953 death of Soviet dictator Joseph Stalin. That same year, Dwight D. Eisenhower, the wartime commander of the European Theater of Operations, became president; he appointed former OSS official John Foster Dulles as secretary of state. Dulles had become a right-wing ideologue by then, and although he had personal knowledge of Erika Glaser’s work on behalf of the United States, he did not push his State Department to permit her to immigrate. Not until 1957 was she finally able to join her husband and children in Virginia, where they lived during her long years of unwanted exile.

She missed the growing-up years of her children, but refused to be bitter about that. Erica Glaser Wallach spent the second half of her life in Warrenton, where she also taught languages and wrote a book about her Siberian experience. She remained idealistic, and at her 1994 funeral, an OSS

colleague said: “Dying had no terror for her. She believed that this life is *the* life, that you should live it fully.”

*See also:* **European Theater of Operations; postwar; prisoners of war; refugees; spies; V-E Day; war brides**

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## GOLD STAR MOTHERS

Gold Star Mothers were those mothers who made the greatest emotional sacrifice for their nation: they lost a child, almost always a son, in the war. Before becoming a Gold Star Mother, a woman would have been a Blue Star Mother: this meant that she had a child in military service, and both types of stars often were displayed in the front windows of homes.

Both groups had their origins in World War I, but the Gold Star leader is more clearly identifiable as Grace Darling Siebold of Washington, D.C. That war ended on November 11, 1918, but she knew nothing of her son’s fate until Christmas Eve, when his personal effects arrived in the daily mail. Even though she had the advantage of living in the nation’s capital, it took her more months to learn that he had been killed the previous August.

Siebold was determined that other mothers would not be so callously treated by the War Department, and within a decade, had organized the American Gold Star Mothers, Inc. The star logo had its origins in an armband worn by the Women’s Committee of the National Council of Defense, a World War I group to which President Woodrow Wilson appointed suffrage leaders Carrie Chapman Catt and Rev. Dr. Anna Howard Shaw. After the 1928 formation of Gold Star Mothers, some members sailed to France to view their loved ones’ graves, and a few years later, in 1936, President Franklin Roosevelt proclaimed the last Sunday in September as Gold Star Mothers Day. Grief is a private thing, though, and women traditionally have not sought attention, with the result that this day never was widely observed.

Six years after its proclamation, however, the organization saw major expansion when the United States entered World War II. Both Blue and Gold Star Mothers held local meetings to exchange information and give each other support, as well as undertaking projects such as sending gifts to troops. The organization’s dues-paying membership stood at about twenty-two thousand at the war’s end, but these women found almost no support in the postwar press—which never did devote a great deal of space to anything

dealing with death, including the plight of war widows. One exception was the tremendous amount of publicity heaped on the penultimate Gold Star Mother, Alleta Sullivan, who lost five sons.

Because the average age of World War II soldiers was in their early twenties, this meant that most mothers were still in their forties at the time of their loss. Although by no means elderly, their image soon became that of the lonely, frail survivor. At the war's end, women whose loved ones returned safely understandably dropped out of Blue Star Mothers clubs, but most Gold Star women felt an even greater need to get together and share their sorrow with someone who truly understood.

Now, when the sixtieth anniversary of the war's end is past, virtually all of these women have died. Humor writer Erma Bombeck also has died, but she wrote movingly of visiting a meeting of Gold Star Mothers in Arizona during the 1980s:

As the white-haired warriors, most of them approaching 90 years of age, stood at attention, their hands over their hearts, their eyes on the flag, reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, I felt I was seeing the last bit of unashamed patriotism ...

A few days ago, I called ... and asked if the Gold Star Mothers were going to meet this Memorial Day.

"Oh no, dear, we're not meeting anymore. We're all so old and we can't drive. It doesn't mean there's a day goes by that our sons aren't on our minds...."

The organization continued during the Korean War of the 1950s, but almost died with the controversial Vietnam War of the 1960s and 1970s. In 1984, Congress passed "An Act to Recognize the Organization Known as the American Gold Star Mothers, Inc.," and three years later, it publicized the still largely unknown holiday with a "Joint Resolution Designating September 27, 1987, as Gold Star Mothers Day." The Washington-based body continues to operate programs, including annual conventions, for about a thousand members. It leads commemorations on Gold Star Mother Day at area memorials, including the Korean War Memorial and the Vietnam Wall.

*See also:* **Blue Star Mothers; fatalities; Sullivan, Alleta; widows**

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### GOODWIN, KATHERINE (1900–1961)

As the top official for members of the Women's Army Corps (WAC) who were assigned to the Army Service Forces, Lt. Col. Katherine R. Goodwin influenced daily life for literally millions of military personnel around the globe—yet she operated out of Washington, D.C., with just one personal secretary.

Called "Kate" by her friends, she was one of the group that jestingly referred to themselves as "the nine old women"—a play on the era's usage of "nine old men" to refer to the justices of the U.S. Supreme Court. These nine women were the core officers for the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC), which later dropped its "auxiliary" status and became the WAC. At age forty-two, Goodwin was the oldest of the nine when she enlisted: the eight others, including their top commander, Oveta Culp Hobby, still were in their thirties. These nine undertook the huge executive assignment of creating the U.S. Army's first non-nursing unit for women.

After their basic training and speciality school, almost 40 percent of corps enlistees ended up under the umbrella of Goodwin's Armed Services Forces (ASF). Working with army men also assigned to the ASF, they were the people who greased the wheels on which the army ran: the ASF provided the essentials that made it possible to fight. Among the forces' many aspects, for example, were the Quartermaster Corps that supplied housing, food, uniforms, and more, as well as the Signal Corps, which included communications and photography.

By mid-1944, Goodwin's ASF was the third-largest such command, following only the women of the Army Air Force (Air WACs), which was headed by Betty Bandel, and its parallel organization for the support of non-aviation troops, the Army Ground Forces (AGF), under Emily Claire Davis. Both of those women wrote postwar histories of their organizations, but Goodwin refused to do so. She objected to the statistical segregation of her women, given that they worked together with men in the ASF, and did not want to further this approach by writing a history that treated them separately. The only document that summarized the group's experience is a tenpage report titled "Distribution, Versatility, and Excellence of Wacs Serving With Army Service Forces," which Goodwin wrote a year before the war's end.

She traveled widely, inspecting conditions for ASF women, and spent much time in recruiting and public relations. According to eminent army historian Mattie Treadwell, Goodwin "also conducted periodic conferences of WAC company officers and recruiters ... in order to improve efficiency and spread the latest information on personnel practices." Goodwin rose to the rank of lieutenant colonel and was honored with the Legion of Merit and other decorations.

A native of Biddeford, Maine, Goodwin graduated from New York's Russell Sage College and later served as



an alumni trustee there. She also did graduate work at the University of Connecticut, the University of Chicago, and at the International People's College in Helsingør, Denmark. She spent twenty-eight postwar years on the faculty of Weaver High School in Hartford, Connecticut—where she spoke fondly of her home, which had been built for Mark Twain. She left there in 1955 to become an administrator at New York City's prestigious Barnard College. Marriage changed her name to Ralston, and she died in New York. Although her life appeared to be a happy one, her case is another example of the underutilization of executive abilities that women demonstrated during World War II.

*See also:* **Bandel, Betty; Davis, Emily Claire; Daytona Beach, WAC Training Center; Des Moines, Fort; Hobby, Oveta Culp; Military Occupational Specialities; Women's Army Auxiliary Corps/Women's Army Corps**

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### GOULD, BEATRICE (1898–1989)

Beatrice Gould and her husband, Bruce Gould, were the top officials at *Ladies Home Journal* during the World War II era, when it was read by more Americans than any other magazine aimed at women. It had originated with another couple, Louisa and Cyrus Curtis, in 1883. The magazine—and the powerful Curtis Publishing Company—grew out of their recognition that the "women's supplement" of their farm periodical attracted more subscribers than did the "main" part.

When they turned it over to their son-in-law, Edward Bok, at the turn of the century, *Ladies Home Journal* was the nation's top female magazine, with more than one million subscribers. Although Bok also was an extremely successful publisher, by the time that the Goulds took over in 1935, the publication had suffered from the Great Depression and a serious circulation decline in circulation. Beatrice Blackmar Gould—like Louisa Knapp Curtis—exercised both managerial skill and creative editorial control to recapture readership during the war era.

More than a business executive and co-editor, she also wrote for the magazine, and even more impressively, was one of about one hundred American women who obtained official press credentials from the military to cover the war

overseas. Most of her pieces were unsigned; the use of her name on a mid-war article about child care, "For 40,000,000 Reasons," may indicate especially strong opinions on the complex issues related to female employment. At the war's end, she emphasized the hard work of maintaining peace and, under the aegis of the War Manpower Commission, also headed a postwar study on the transition of working women to the peacetime economy.

Born in Emmitsburg, Iowa, Beatrice Blackmar graduated from the University of Iowa and earned a master's degree at New York City's prestigious Columbia School of Journalism. Despite these credentials, she began her career at a paper in Ottumwa, Iowa. After her 1923 marriage to Bruce Gould, also an Iowa graduate, she returned to New York and wrote for several national magazines, including *Vanity Fair*. She edited women's news for the *New York Sunday World* and then rose to associate editor at the *Saturday Evening Post* just before the couple moved to *Ladies Home Journal*. While also rearing a daughter, they managed to find time to write two plays, the first of which, *Man's Estate*, was produced in 1929. In 1936, they co-authored a screenplay, *Reunion*.

When the Goulds ended their 32-year career at *Ladies Home Journal* in 1967, it had a circulation of 7.2 million. During the war years, it was arguably the most progressively feminist of any major publication, including periodicals such as *The Nation*, *Atlantic*, and others that generally are considered more liberal. The key was hiring thoughtful women as writers, especially the brilliant monthly columnist, Dorothy Thompson. Other excellent wartime reporters were Louise Paine Benjamin and Nell Giles; the magazine also was an outlet for young Elizabeth Janeway, who would publish classic feminist books in the 1970s. Comic relief was provided by cartoonist Helen Hokinson, but the Goulds also gave space to a few conservative male writers. The monthly medical columns by physician Leslie B. Hohman were especially traditionalist in tone and presented a great contrast to prescient Dorothy Thompson's monthly pieces.

Thompson was known, too, for her marriage to increasingly alcoholic novelist Sinclair Lewis, and other publishing couples of the era, especially Blanche and Alfred Knopf, also engaged in publicized fights. Nothing negative, however, was said of the Goulds' marriage. Their lives also interestingly paralleled those of DeWitt and Lila Acheson Wallace, who left Minnesota as newlyweds and founded *Reader's Digest* with Lila's meager savings in 1922.

Beatrice Gould was honored by the Association for Women in Communication in 1940, the second year that it conducted annual awards. She made television appearances, too, when that medium became widespread in the 1950s, and the couple was elected to the University of Iowa Hall of Fame. *Folio: The Magazine for Magazine Management* recently named the Goulds as publishers whose case studies are worthy of attention.

They penned their mutual autobiography from their comfortable retirement in Hopewell, New Jersey, where Beatrice Gould died of Alzheimer's disease at age ninety.

See also: correspondents, war; drama; Hokinson, Helen; Knopf, Blanche; magazines; Thompson, Dorothy

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### "GOVERNMENT GIRLS"

Female employment during World War II is so profoundly symbolized by "Rosie the Riveter" and the millions of women who took traditionally-male jobs in defense industries that this image has overwhelmed other employment changes. Of far greater importance in the long run, however, was the entrance of women into service jobs and especially clerical jobs that had been the province of men. As Labor Secretary Frances Perkins said early in 1943:

We find there is a gradual replacement of men by women in laboratories, banks, businesses, ticket offices; ... as tax collectors, radio announcers ... A definitely encouraging trend has been a break-down in many quarters of prejudices against certain types of woman workers. Married women ... older women ... [and] Negro women in unprecedented fashion are getting a foothold.

Nowhere was this more evident than in the office buildings of Washington, D.C., where Perkins herself worked. She witnessed the change from Great Depression days, when applications for government jobs from well-qualified women were rejected in favor of men because men were assumed to be household heads. Even non-partisan civil service positions were likely to be allotted on the basis of need, as a kind of charity. When war loomed, though, the situation reversed almost overnight. Although little noted at the time, arguably the largest and most lasting change in women's employment was having Uncle Sam as her boss.

On June 30, 1940, there were 186,210 women working throughout the nation for the multiple agencies of the federal government's executive branch. A year later—and still well prior to Pearl Harbor and American entrance into the war—there were 266,407, or a 43 percent increase in just one year. In this same period, before the first non-nursing military units for women were created, the War Department alone hired more than 60,000 civilian women. Most of them worked in Washington, as the city's population leaped by about a third in the early 1940s. Almost no one had a nice office, and many "government girls" spent their days in shabby two-or-three-story buildings that then lined Constitution Avenue and the National Mall. Prior to air conditioning, they sweated in the summer and shivered in winter's drafts.



The original caption of this 1943 photo read, "Government girl hostesses entertain soldiers." *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

They were called "government girls" with reason, for almost all were young, unmarried, and newcomers to the capital. Local labor would be insufficient for the huge paperwork tasks of running an army and navy composed of millions of men around the world, and as the nation geared up its defenses in the spring of 1941, almost two thousand "government girls" were arriving each month. They responded to advertising for clerks and typists, and after the United States formally entered the war, their numbers increased to an average of three thousand per month.

The ads that attracted them were most likely to run in newspapers in the Upper Midwest, where the schools were good and career prospects for young women in an agricultural economy were poor. The majority came from places such as Minnesota and Michigan, and just weeks before Pearl Harbor, the *New York Times Magazine* said of them: "On the whole, they are a pretty unsophisticated lot. Many of them are away from home for the first time ... They came to get a job. They came to get between \$105 and \$120 a month."

Recruited by the still all-male Army Services Forces, these young women—many just out of high school and still in their teens—typically had concentrated on their school's "commercial course," which included bookkeeping, shorthand, and above all, typing. This was an era prior to dictaphones or any method of taping one's words, and male bosses (almost none of whom could type) needed stenographers capable of speedily recording their memos and military orders. These young women had learned the vocabulary of shorthand in high school and ideally could record words as fast as they were spoken. In typing, the goal was to develop hand-eye coordination good enough to type at least sixty words a minute with complete accuracy. Before a job was offered, these skills and more were tested in civil service examinations; usually a woman was expected to read shorthand as she typed.

Typewriters were not yet electric, and hands had to be strong to manipulate the keys. The ribbons soaked with ink that actually made the marks on the paper periodically had to be changed—a messy and rather complicated task. Nor was

there much allowance for mistakes, as erasers akin to those on pencils were the only correction method, and they left visible evidence of the error. The military usually required its communications to be in triplicate—or even more—and erasures were almost impossible on the carbon paper that was used for multiple copies prior to copying machines. Accuracy was even more important on memos for wide circulation, which were done on "ditto" machines with purple ink that stained one's hands and clothes, or on "stencils," in which the typeface cut the filmy original that then was put on the mimeograph machine. Stencils were prone to rip, and making presentable copies required appreciable skill.

Such work often was tedious and monotonous beyond male patience, and hiring executives therefore were open about Uncle Sam's preference: the government wanted young women, especially from rural areas and without college educations, women who expected to work hard and whose aspirations were fairly limited. In most offices, they joined a "steno pool" of stenographers with no particular boss or subject speciality. For the occasional woman who had been a private secretary to one executive with diverse interests, the steno pool was much like putting a skilled machinist to work on a numbing assembly line: the result was that it was not unusual for an applicant with a good resume to be passed over for an ingenue—for reasons that seemed valid to the boss.

No employment law yet dealt with such issues, and as the publication of the Business & Professional Women's Clubs wearily acknowledged: "Stenography is still a woman's greatest opening wedge. Of the 200 women who hold the highest positions held by women under Civil Service, the greatest number began as secretarial assistants." Although discrimination was real, the possibility of promotion into a genuine government career also was real, and *Independent Woman* encouraged the neophyte: "To enter Washington is like entering a great university. Even a typist can feel like a freshman ... Most departments have in-service schools ... Most of the schools and colleges in Washington have courses especially designed for government workers. Everybody from the highest to the lowest in Washington studies."

Her work might be dull, but most women's off-work life in Washington presented enough challenges that going to a boring job might well feel like a relief. Even more than the blue-collar women who were recruited to defense plants, these pink-collar women found Washington to be crowded and expensive—more so than any other wartime boom town. This was true already early in 1942, as *Independent Woman* continued:

There is no use enlarging on the impossible living conditions in our capital city. It has had plenty of publicity. Everybody is desperately trying to do something about it, but ...

No girl should be insane enough to go to the city first and expect to get a job afterwards. She can probably get the job all right, but until she does, she is likely to be out on a long limb in the cold so far as sleeping and eating are concerned. If she takes her [civil service] examination locally and receives her appointment, she will be told to

whom to report when she arrives, and something will be done for her.

Government agencies indeed did their best to arrange housing for new employees and even offered interest-free loans until the first paychecks. Nonetheless, most women found themselves crowded into small rooms with three or four roommates, with inadequate bathroom and kitchen facilities—and yet rents often were twice as high as elsewhere. Salaries, although better than in most of the nation, were not double, and paychecks barely stretched to the end of the month. Many women had no kitchen access where they lived, and in an era prior to microwaves and fast food, were dependent on restaurants—which often were crowded to the point that diners ate standing up. Transportation services also were jammed. The result was that, in the six months after Pearl Harbor, as many as half of "government girls" quit and went home in disgust. Better-informed women would not consider employment there, as a May 1942 *New York Times Magazine* article reported that "50 percent of the eligible stenographers are refusing appointment to Washington."

Among President Franklin Roosevelt's many interests was architecture, and he enjoyed fiddling with plans to solve the local housing crisis. Dormitories for "government girls" eventually were built, although not to his specifications. Similar to those constructed in boom towns for munitions workers, *Architectural Record* reported that they would consist of "31 residence halls with 12,291 rooms ... within walking distance of likely places of employment." Those at "the new War Department Building at Arlington Farms"—later called the Pentagon—included a cafeteria and canteen, as well as administration and assembly buildings, a central laundry, an infirmary, and maintenance buildings. Although convenient, such "homes" were depressingly temporary in style and so quickly constructed with such cheap materials that they were only slightly better than slum-like.

Still, the housing reflected the Washington's willingness to innovate, as did other changes. Government agencies developed flexible working hours that encouraged traffic flow and eased crowding on buses and trains; for some women, the working day ended as early as 3:30. Organizations such as Travelers Aid, the YWCA, and the USO helped with personal problems and tried to make newcomers feel welcome. A rather closed southern town dominated by society matrons at the war's beginning, Washington was much democratized by its end. Some of this was due to Eleanor Roosevelt, who saw that even ordinary office workers occasionally were included on invitation lists for White House receptions.

And even if it was expensive and crowded, wartime Washington was not all work and no play. Military bands often gave free concerts; most of the city's museums, monuments, and many parks were free. There were the cherry blossoms in the spring and the national Christmas tree in winter. Romances flourished between these young civilian employees and the soldiers and sailors assigned to the area's military installations: Fort Belvoir, for example, is just a few miles from the



“Arlington Farms” area where the new women’s housing was built. Young men with weekend passes crowded downtown streets, and even if the restaurants and movie theaters were full to capacity, these young adults found other ways to entertain themselves. Countless marriages grew out of chance encounters between couples who otherwise never would have met. This melding of people from faraway places soon worked to make the nation more cosmopolitan, less dominated by regional differences and intolerances.

Since Civil War days, Washington also had been a mecca for African Americans. So many had lived there for so many generations that their upward-bound government job progress was little noted, but thousands of women who had spent their lives as cooks and maids saw their daughters become office workers during the war years. Washington-based organizations such as Jane Spaulding’s National Association of Colored Women and Mabel Staupers’s National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses also gained much momentum because of the war.

Rural rubes though many of them initially were, these young women changed Washington even as Washington changed them. Already in 1941, the *New York Times Magazine* acknowledged this:

Federal Triangle at 5 o’clock in the afternoon looks more like a college campus than the center of the nation’s capital. These youngsters are turning the fashions of this city upside down ... Washington women are learning to go hatless and like it.

Without consciously intending to do so, “government girls” permanently ended a long tradition of jobs reserved for men. Just eighty years earlier, at the beginning of the Civil War, the federal government employed no women other than cleaning women and the occasional seamstress or nurse. When finally the hand-copying that was required in the Patent Office proved so tedious they could not persuade men

to do it, the first Washington women were hired—but they worked at home, and if they were married, they paychecks were made out to their husbands. Their finished work was delivered by mail or courier, and they were banned from entering offices, where they were certain to prove a “distraction” to male employees. Blissfully ignorant of this history, World War II “government girls” took a big step forward in making the federal government truly “of the people and by the people.”

*See also:* **African-American women; bands; boom towns; Business and Professional Women; defense industries; dress; housing; keypunch machines; labor force; recreation; travel; Travelers Aid; Pearl Harbor; Perkins, Frances; Roosevelt, Eleanor; underutilization; USO; YWCA**

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## **HALL, FLORENCE (1888–1952)**

The head of the Women's Land Army (WLA) in World War II, Florence Hall, supervised this quasi-governmental group of female farm workers—which, by the war's end, had attracted more than one million women. Most worked part-time, usually during harvests, when they picked crops ranging from Vermont apples to California zucchini.

Like so many other wartime agencies, the WLA was modeled on a similar body in Britain, but, importantly, the British agency held the power to draft women, most of whom worked year-round on one farm. Hall's challenge, instead, was to persuade women who never would have considered farm work to help out for a shorter period. Although some young women, especially college students, spent the entire summer on a farm, most WLA workers lived at home and worked just a short portion of the year.

The women who responded to Hall's recruitment efforts came from every career field. Writing in *Independent Woman*, the publication of Business & Professional Women (BPW), during what would turn out to be the war's last summer, she said that:

WLA workers ... were listed as: accountants, actresses, artists, bank clerks and tellers, beauticians, ... buyers, ..., dietitians, designers, editors, ... musicians, masseuses, models, stenographers, ... singers, social workers, ... and women from many other vocations.

Her aim was to assure these BPW members that if they worked in local fields and orchards during long summer evenings and/or weekends—or even better, if they gave up their vacation time to do so—they would be working alongside women such as themselves. There was an implicit racism to this promise that other field hands also would be middle-class

women. Many African-American men who traditionally picked cotton in Southern fields, for example, had joined the military or gotten better jobs in defense industries, and it was Hall's job to find women to replace them. Advertising for the Women's Land Army emphasized white women, but Hall also recruited black women, as indicated by articles in *Brown American* and *Pulse*.

More important, though, was the fact that the modern dependency on Hispanics had not yet developed: instead, the great orchards and fields of the West Coast became desperately short of labor when Japanese Americans, who traditionally did this work, were forcibly removed. As other potential workers found better jobs in the many West Coast defense industries, farmers there were shocked to discover in the summer of 1942 that their usual sources of labor simply were gone. The Women's Land Army was authorized by Congress in the spring of 1943 largely to prevent a repetition of that, and Florence Hall, a credentialed home economist and career employee of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), was immediately appointed to head it.

She understood that solving the agricultural labor shortage could not be done by any method other than appealing to patriotism. The low pay that middle-class women would earn from the farmer never would be enough: instead, Hall recruited for the WLA by emphasizing that this was a way in which women could help win the war without great disruption to their career or family life. Food was essential, not only for Americans, but also for many millions of military and civilian allies in both Europe and Asia whose crops were disrupted by war. With Canada and Australia, the United States became the bread basket for the world.

Hall's work thus was largely that of a public relations agent. More than anything else, she spent her time making

speeches and finding writers, editors, and radio broadcasters who were willing to publicize the need for women in agriculture—especially the during the key summer and fall periods, when temporary workers were essential to prevent valuable crops from rotting before they were harvested.

Her Women's Land Army and the related "Crop Corps" both were under the aegis of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and Hall also worked closely with thousands of "county agents," the male agronomists employed by the USDA to work in each rural county on soil conservation and other farm issues. This program had begun in the era of World War I, and it had an auxiliary function aimed at women: female county agents worked with farm wives, especially in "Home Demonstration Clubs" that taught best practices in many things, including gardening, canning, and other food preservation. Because Hall was herself such a careerist, her contacts made it relatively easy to utilize this built-in network, which reached to the heart of localized harvesting needs.

As with any project of this magnitude, Hall had to fight her share of bureaucratic turf wars, particularly against male USDA officials, many of whom preferred to obtain draft exemptions for male agricultural workers instead of creating this new program. They also traditionally prioritized the large-farm interests of the Upper Midwest, where especially dairy farming was indeed a year-round job. Hall's work, however, concentrated instead on small, or "truck farms," which specialized in crops that needed intensive labor for a relatively brief period of the year. A New Jersey farm that grew onions and blueberries for the New York City market, for instance, needed help only when the onions were set or when the blueberries were picked—and giving a draft exemption to a man for the few weeks of the year when labor was essential was not a wise use of the nation's manpower. Hall, however, repeatedly had to explain the difference between farming needs in, for example, Minnesota and Massachusetts.

Like Oveta Culp Hobby, Mildred McAfee, and other women who created government or military units from scratch, Hall demonstrated tremendous executive ability. In just two years, from 1943 to 1945, she established and executed a nationwide program that attracted a million women to work that they never otherwise would have done. She retired from the Agriculture Department in 1947 and died just five years later.

**See also:** advertisements; African-American women; British women; Business and Professional Women's Club; conservation; defense industries; draft; food; Hobby, Oveta Culp; Japanese-Americans; McAfee, Mildred; recruitment; Women's Land Army

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## HALL, VIRGINIA (1906–1982)

A woman of tremendous courage, Virginia Hall made a highly identifiable mark for Hitler's Gestapo: called "the Limping Lady," she had a wooden leg. Despite this serious handicap, she repeatedly risked her life to spy for the Allies in occupied France.

Born in Baltimore to a wealthy family, she was educated at elite women's colleges, Massachusetts' Radcliffe and New York's Barnard (where she shared the first name of the college president, Virginia Gildersleeve). Hall followed this with studies in Paris and Vienna, becoming fluent in not only French and German, but also Italian. She finalized her education at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. Although her family's status would have allowed her to live as a socialite, Hall wanted a career.

In July 1931, she went to work for the U.S. State Department, first as a clerk in the American embassy in Warsaw; from Poland, she went to even more grim location, Estonia. She had been transferred to Turkey when she lost her leg: infection set in after a hunting accident, and it was amputated in Istanbul. In this era prior to laws against employment discrimination, Hall was forced out of her job because of the amputation—but she did not return home.

She was in Paris when Germany invaded Poland in September 1939, and the war in Europe began. When France fell the following summer, she joined thousands of others who fled to ostensibly neutral Spain, where British intelligence soon recruited her. While working for the British Special Operations Executive (SOE), she posed as a reporter for the *New York Post* while the United States still was neutral. Under that cover, she reentered occupied France at its capital of Vichy, in August 1941.

Hall lent credibility to her disguise by actually publishing several *Post* stories; in the first, she introduced the new capital that French fascists had set up in southern France, far from Paris' democrats. Yet, although Vichy was the most favored place for Nazi collaborators, life there could not be called pleasant—and, unlike most writers, Hall's report also noted another of fascism's discriminations against women:

Vichy is a tiny town used once by summer visitors ... It is an infinitesimally small place to accommodate the government of France ... I haven't seen any butter and there is very little milk. I also see little clothing in the shops ... Women are no longer entitled to buy cigarettes and men are rationed to two packages a week.

Continuing this cover of a traveling newspaper reporter, she set herself up in Lyons and began to assist French resisters to the German occupation. According to author Peter Kross,



Hall also “was able to safely return many downed pilots to England, as well as escaped POWs.” Her work became even more dangerous when the United States entered the war in December 1941, making her officially an enemy. She dropped the reporter persona, went underground, and continued to make clandestine contacts for more than a year, until German troops from the North African campaign retreated into southern France. Ostensibly neutral Spain, however, brought little safety: She and her colleagues were immediately arrested when they tried to enter, and Hall spent six weeks in a Spanish prison.

Upon release, this formidable woman again assumed an identity as a reporter for the *Chicago Times*—but soon decided that the intrigue of wartime Madrid involved too much gamesmanship and not enough real help to people who were genuinely suffering under the Nazis. She returned to London for training as a radio operator, and while there, in November, 1943, changed her employer to the new American spy agency, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS).

She then developed a completely different persona to sneak back into northern France in the months just prior to the D-Day invasion. Now portraying a simple milkmaid, she lived, according to author Elizabeth McIntosh, “in a little house ... with one room, no water or electricity.” Hall perfected the disguise by “taking cows to pasture, and in the process, found several good fields for parachute drops.” She later traded the cow-herder image for goats, moving several times in the weeks prior to D-Day, lest the Nazis notice her. These rural locales enabled her to radio at least fifteen drop spots, where Allied planes deposited the goods and money that her spy network needed.

After D-Day, she returned to southern France, where she again managed to set up radio contact with London and provided valuable information on German troop movements in the summer of 1944. Her last assignment was on the Austrian border, where she re-created herself as a German woman who had been born in Turkey. Ultimately, according to Kross, “Hall was able to organize three battalions of Free French soldiers” who destroyed bridges, train tracks, and telephones to handicap the German occupiers. “Hall’s guerrillas killed over 150 [Germans] and captured hundreds more.”

During the last year of the war, Hall met her future husband, OSS agent Paul Goillet—but they did not marry until 1950, and she retained both her maiden name and her career. When the OSS became the modern CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) in 1947, Hall also made the transfer. She continued to work in both Europe and Washington throughout the 1950s and into the 1960s, but was increasingly underutilized by male bosses who had no wartime experience of their own and were reluctant to recognize hers. She retired in 1966, at the mandatory age of sixty, and never told her Maryland neighbors about her adventurous life.

Some colleagues appreciated it, though, and in 1945, at the insistence of OSS founder William (“Wild Bill”) Donovan, President Harry Truman awarded Virginia Hall the highest possible decoration, the Distinguished Service Cross. Her

former SOE colleagues saw that she was rewarded with recognition as a Member of the British Empire.

**See also:** cigarettes; D-Day; decorations; European Theater of Operations; Gildersleeve, Virginia; intelligence, military; radio; refugees; spies; underutilization

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### HALLAREN, MARY AGNES (1907–2005)

The first peacetime director of the Women’s Army Corps (WAC), Mary A. Hallaren also commanded almost ten thousand women who served in occupied Europe; during the war, she had been second in command to Lt. Colonel Anna Wilson in the European Theater of Operations (ETO). Unlike Wilson, Hallaren made the army her lifelong career, not retiring until 1960—yet gender discrimination meant that she never rose above the rank of colonel.

Born and educated in the Boston area, she was a middle-school teacher until the military opened its ranks to non-nurse women in 1942. Had she not been a teacher accustomed to giving orders, she might have been intimidated by the army recruiter who told her that, at five feet, she was too short. According to the *Washington Post*, she replied, “you don’t have to be six feet tall to have a brain that works.” She often was called “the little colonel” because she was only 4’ 10”, but there was nothing little about Hallaren’s courage and abilities.

Part of the stellar inaugural class at Fort Des Moines, Iowa, her merits were soon obvious to corps director Oveta Culp Hobby. Within a year, Hallaren led the first WACs to England, where she worked with ETO chief Dwight D. Eisenhower and others to prepare for D-Day. She assisted Anna (“Tony”) Wilson as ETO commander, in charge of army women from Scotland down through Sicily and east to Berlin. During her time in London, Hallaren set the model for the thousands of WACs there who endured bombing from Germany’s pioneer guided missiles. The *Post* reported that she “was especially proud that not one of her women went AWOL” (absent without leave) during this time of daily terror.

Back in Washington, D.C., at the war’s end, Hallaren joined Emily C. Davis as the chief authors of the legislation that created a permanent place for women in the regular army. Colonel Hobby resigned as WAC director in July 1945, after the war in Europe was over but while it still was ongoing

in Japan. Hobby's successor, Westray Battle Boyce, served two years and then resigned, and Hallaren thus became the corps' third director and the first appointed in peacetime. Her highest priority, both before and after being appointed to the top position, was working with Davis on the legislation that eventually became the Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948.

After the act passed, Hallaren had the honor of being the first woman sworn into the non-nurse regular army—but the act limited women to the rank of colonel, unlike male heads of corps, who likely would have been promoted to general much earlier in their careers. She continued as WAC director until 1953, which was the longest tenure of any of the nine women who served in this frustrating, neither-fish-nor-fowl Pentagon post. Although the ostensible chief for all women in the army, the position required endless negotiations with the male commanders under whom WACs served on a daily basis, and despite praise from Eisenhower and five-star General George C. Marshall, many Pentagon officials treated her and other women condescendingly. It was typical of the times, as even while honoring Hallaren with her picture on its cover, *Newsweek* captioned its 1951 feature, "Boss of the Ladies' Legion."

Hallaren gave up the WAC command in 1953, the same year that her WAVES counterpart, Joy Bright Hancock, retired from her long service to the U.S. Navy (and the same year that Dwight D. Eisenhower became president of the United States). Hallaren, however, was younger than Hancock, and therefore stayed in the army until 1960. Prior to her retirement at age fifty-three, she served in the Pentagon, as well as in Japan and in Germany. In 1965, Hallaren began a second long career as the executive director of one of President Lyndon Johnson's anti-poverty programs: with her long experience in leading women's organizations, she was ideal for heading Women In Community Service, or WICS, a welfare-to-work project that teaches job skills.

One of the most decorated of the WAC founders, the most prestigious of Colonel Hallaren's honors were the Bronze Star, which was awarded for her service in combat conditions in the ETO, and the Legion of Merit, which she earned a remarkable three times. Although well-known newscaster Tom Brokaw did not mention these medals and also erred in some references to her work, he honored her with inclusion in his best-selling book, *The Greatest Generation*. She was inducted into the National Women's Hall of Fame in Seneca Falls, New York, and was a founder of Women in Military Service to America, the memorial/museum in Arlington Cemetery that was dedicated in 1997. A longtime Arlington resident, Mary A. Hallaren died at age ninety-seven; she was buried at St. Patrick's Cemetery in her native Lowell, Massachusetts.

**See also:** **Boyce, Westray Battle; Davis, Emily C.; decorations; European Theater of Operations; Fort Des Moines; Hobby, Oveta Culp; occupied Germany; occupied Japan; rank; teachers; Women's Army Corps**

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## HANCOCK, JOY BRIGHT (1898–1986)

Joy Bright Hancock is not only meritorious as a leader of women in the military's maritime branches during and after World War II, she also was one of just two Navy WAVES who had served in World War I. Further, she is unique in having married three career naval officers and being widowed three times. Despite these changes, "Hancock" was the surname that she used most of life.

Born in Wildwood, New Jersey, at age twenty Joy Bright became one of more than ten thousand women who enlisted in the Navy in 1918, during World War I. Because both the Navy and the Marine Corps found themselves desperately short of qualified office workers who could be ordered where needed, War Department lawyers researched the law and found no legal barrier to the voluntary enlistment of women. Especially on the East Coast, women were quickly sworn in, trained, uniformed, and assigned to naval stations. In the Navy, they were called "Yeomen (F)," with the "F" standing for "female;" the Marine Corps dubbed their approximately 350 women as "Marinettes." Yeomen (F) Joy Bright worked at the Office of the Naval Superintendent of Construction in Camden, New Jersey, and then at the Naval Air Station at Cape May.

The latter assignment presaged a lifelong career in naval aviation, a field that matured as she did. There was a early interruption when she wed Lt. Charles Gray Little—but he died just months after the wedding in the 1921 crash of an experimental airship in England. Still fascinated with flying, the young widow found employment in Washington, D.C., with the Navy's new Bureau of Aeronautics, but returned to New Jersey in 1923 because the Navy placed its new lighter-than-air program at Lakehurst.

These aircraft proved untenable, but not before Joy Bright Little lost her second husband to a test flight. She married Lt. Commander Lewis Hancock, Jr. in 1924 and again was widowed the very next year; he was killed when his rigid-airship, *USS Shenandoah*, broke apart in a storm. Much later, in 1943, she would have the honor of christening the *USS Lewis Hancock*, a World War II ocean-going ship built in New Jersey and named for her husband.

Her family was financially able to help her recover from these tragedies, and her sister accompanied Hancock on a round-the-world trip. She also earned a pilot's license in this era, something that an appreciable number of women had done by the late twenties. On the ground, however, she found less receptive attitudes when she tried to join the na-

tion's diplomatic corps. She attended a Washington school that specialized in preparing people for foreign service, but the era's State Department was almost as much a male domain as the War Department, and she was not hired. Hancock again returned to the much more progressive Bureau of Aeronautics in 1930. Her in-depth knowledge of aviation made her ideal at handling the bureau's public relations, and she published a book, *Airplanes in Action*, in 1938.

Thus, as a longtime civilian employee in Washington with the Department of the Navy, Hancock's life changed comparatively little when World War II began. While the United States still was neutral and Britain was fighting for its life, she went to Canada to examine the role of women in aviation for the British Commonwealth. After Pearl Harbor and the beginning of the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps, Hancock worked to support Congresswoman Margaret Chase Smith's legislation for a similar naval unit. The WAVES began in July, 1942, and when Hancock took its oath in October, she again could wear a Navy uniform.

She initially served merely as the WAVES' liaison to her longtime bureau—but, in fact, she was much more than that. Instead of attending basic training like other WAVES, she helped WAVES' director Mildred McAfee create its curriculum. Her decades of experience also meant that she was sworn in at a higher rank than that of most WAVES, who usually were ensigns. Instead, both she and the other World War I female veteran held higher ranks—and beyond that, Lieutenant Commander Joy Bright Hancock and Lieutenant Eunice Whyte were honored with the World War I Victory Ribbon in 1943.

Her primary goal was to see that WAVES got non-traditional naval jobs, especially as aircraft mechanics—and the WAVES, in fact, proved excellent at using women's multiple abilities. However, unlike army women and the Navy Nurse Corps, WAVES did not get the opportunity to go to either the European or Pacific Theaters of Operation. Hancock nonetheless spent much of her time in the air over the United States, as she traveled to inspect WAVES from Florida to California. Headquartered at the new Pentagon, she reported to the Deputy Chief of Naval Operations (Air), and in 1944, when the Navy finally allowed WAVES to go to Hawaii, Alaska, and the Caribbean, she worked in Hawaii. In March, 1945, six months before the war's end, she became Commander Hancock, a rank equivalent to lieutenant colonel in the army.

When the war ended, there was much uncertainty about whether the women's military units would continue, but Hancock, with her long civilian experience, did not suffer the anxiety that afflicted many of her colleagues, most of whom left the military and went on with their civilian lives. Both WAC and WAVES officers at headquarters worked on simultaneously on demobilization and their hopes for continued careers. In February 1946, Hancock became head of the still-in-limbo WAVES; she was promoted to captain, the equivalent of a full colonel in the army, the following July. Navy captains usually are given the command of a ship, but this would not be the case for women for decades into the future.

Instead, Captain Hancock worked closely with Colonels Westray Battle Boyce and Mary A. Hallaren, her counterparts with the WAC, on legislation to make women a permanent part of the military. The result of their long, hard work was the Women's Armed Services Integration Act, which Congress passed in 1948. Hancock again traveled widely during this period, especially in setting up the WAVES basic training school for enlisted women at Great Lakes, Illinois.

She also succeeded in getting the Navy to follow the example of the Coast Guard's SPARS in co-educational training for officers; the Navy's facility at Newport, Rhode Island was gender-integrated under her watch. In 1949, she joined Hallaren on a trip to Europe—where Hallaren's WACs had been stationed since 1943—and upon their return, Hancock finally was able to convince her superiors that WAVES should be assigned to postwar Europe and Japan. She also supervised the thousands of WAVES recalled to service when the Korean War began.

Hancock served as head of the WAVES for seven years, and when she retired from the Navy in 1953, was awarded the Legion of Merit. She married Vice Admiral Ralph A. Ofstie the next year and sailed with him during 1955–1956 as he commanded the Sixth Fleet. Once again, however, her husband died after just two years of marriage.

A widow for thirty years, Captain Hancock divided her time between New Jersey and the Virginia suburbs of Washington—as well as a farm on St. Croix in the Virgin Islands. She published her autobiography, *Lady in the Navy* (1972), fourteen years prior to her death at age eighty-eight. Mildred McAfee Horton, who had commanded the WAVES during World War II, wrote in its introduction:

No WAVE of the Navy knows more about the experience of women in the service than Joy Hancock, a veteran yeoman of the First World War, a civilian employee in the Bureau of Aeronautics, the widow of three naval officers, WAVE representative in the Bureau of Aeronautics in the Second World War, and from 1946 to 1953, Assistant Chief of Naval Personnel for Women.

The state of New Jersey honored Hancock in 1950, but she donated her papers to the University of Georgia, which maintains an endowment in her name. She is buried at Arlington National Cemetery.

**See also:** Boyce, Westray Battle; British women; decorations; demobilization; European Theater of Operations; Hallaren, Mary A.; McAfee, Mildred; Navy Nurse Corps; occupied Germany; occupied Japan; Pacific Theater of Operation; Pearl Harbor; Smith, Margaret Chase; SPARS; WAVES; Women's Armed Services Integration Act; Women's Army Auxiliary Corps; Women Marines

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## HARRIMAN, FLORENCE JAFFREY HURST ("DAISY") (1870–1967)

The American minister to Norway when the Nazis occupied it, Daisy Harriman demonstrated calm courage in a perilous time. Nothing in her privileged, protected background would have predicted that: she grew up in elite society at the epicenter of the Gilded Age; her father was president of the New York City Yacht Club. Like many women of that class and era, she did not attend school, but learned the things deemed necessary for women from governesses; she debuted at eighteen and married the next year.

Always called "Mrs. J. Borden Harriman" in the press, her banker husband was unusual among his Wall Street colleagues in supporting his wife's idealism. The couple had several disappointments before the arrival of a healthy girl in 1897, and Ethel Borden Harriman would share much of her mother's active life before predeceasing her in 1953.

In the winter of 1909–10, Daisy Harriman joined another liberal and immensely wealthy woman, Alva Vanderbilt Belmont, in rallying society women to support working women during the great New York City garment industry strike. When some twenty thousand workers—most of them young and many of them Jewish—went out on strike, upper-class women not only donated to their cause, but also refused to buy clothes until the garment manufacturers settled with the Women's Trade Union League.

Harriman then accepted appointment as manager of the New York State Reformatory for Women at Bedford; she stuck with that inglorious position for twelve long years. Although New York women did not yet have the vote, she campaigned for Democrat Woodrow Wilson in 1912, and when he won, he named her to the Federal Industrial Relations Commission, one of the first such federal appointments. She used it to follow up on the interest she had demonstrated in unions, traveling the nation to investigate causes of worker discontent for the commission. That appointment also was a factor in her move to Washington after her husband's 1914 death.

The United States entered World War I in 1917, and she chaired the federal government's Committee on Women in Industry. Further wartime experience came with creation of the Red Cross Motor Corps, which sponsored some five hundred female ambulance drivers in Europe. New York women also won the vote that year, and in 1918, Harriman went to France to work through the end of what then was called "the Great War." All American women won the vote in 1920—but voters elected Republicans throughout that decade, and Harriman's abilities were not utilized.

Instead, she published a book, *From Pinafores to Politics*

(1923), which summarized her life thus far and the progressive causes that she helped to win. She also concentrated on getting into female voters into the Democratic Party; her role in this was so strong that fellow New Yorker Eleanor Roosevelt later called Daisy Harriman *the* founder of Democratic Women's Clubs. She was the national president from 1922 to 1930—while also maintaining a reputation as such an interesting Washington hostess that invitations to her regular "Sunday night suppers" were prized by liberals and conservatives alike. Harriman managed all this despite a serious decline from the level of financial luxury she had enjoyed as a girl.

Democrats won a landslide election in 1932, and President Franklin Roosevelt made the first appointments of women to major offices, including diplomatic posts. The first such was Florida's Ruth Bryan Owen, who represented the U.S. in Denmark, and the second was Daisy Harriman, appointed as ambassador to Norway in 1937. Although Norwegian women had won the vote two decades prior to most American women, Oslo's emissaries nonetheless initially were skeptical about a female ambassador. Harriman won them over in part because of her athletic ability: Norwegians admired the way that this woman in her late sixties swam their fjords and skied their mountains.

Nazi Germany already had taken over or neutralized Austria and other parts of eastern Europe, and World War II began when it quickly conquered Poland in September, 1939. A month later, Harriman had to deal with a diplomatic crisis. In the words of Eleanor Roosevelt and co-author Lorena Hickok:

A German warship seized an American freighter, the *City of Flint*, painted out the American flags on her sides, put a German crew aboard, hoisted a Danish flag over her, and took her to a Norwegian port ... The American government demanded her release as a neutral ship, with her American crew and cargo. The Germans claimed she was carrying munitions and should be interned ... The negotiations were exceedingly delicate. The American Minister [Harriman] finally won out, and the *City of Flint* was released.

Snow was still on the ground the following spring, when Hitler's troops invaded peaceful Norway. Harriman later chronicled the important events, beginning in January:

The King opened parliament, calling for a policy of strict neutrality and for greater defense appropriations. Princess Martha went about quietly laying plans for the taking over of men's work by women in case of war. A hundred incidents should have prepared us. Instead, we were transfixed, still watching the war in Finland.

One afternoon in February, a Nazi plane landed just outside Oslo. Without a by-your-leave, thirty passengers were disgorged who scattered over the field with cameras, taking photographs, making sights and memoranda. The effrontery of the incident was a warning.

At 3:00 AM [on April 9], the telephone made me jump out of bed. Sir Cecil Dormer asked if I would take over the British Legation, as German warships were coming up the fjord.

It was not possible to reach Washington by telephone. We suddenly became aware that the voice of the Oslo telegraph operator, who was saying the perhaps our message would not get through to Washington, was an unfamiliar one. More German, we thought, than Norwegian accent. We put in a call for the U.S. Legation at Stockholm [the] Secretary of Legation agreed to forward our message to Washington both by telephone, if possible, and by cable. I could hear him catch his breath, and his tone change, as I dictated our cable and he caught the full significance.

Forced to make her own decisions without advice from Washington, Harriman accepted both British and French diplomats and their families into the American embassy: otherwise, because their nations were officially at war with Germany, these people were at real risk of being taken as prisoners of war. Air raids began with the daylight, and by 10:00 a.m., Oslo had fallen. The Norwegian royal family headed to neutral Sweden, and Harriman and her diplomatic colleagues followed; she endured bombing that killed a nearby aide. With an American flag hoisted on their car, she and others took icy mountain roads to elude the Nazi machine guns that already blocked major highways.

They made it to Stockholm, and Harriman spent her seventieth birthday working arduously to ensure that the hundreds of Americans in Norway got safely out. She made arrangements for transporting, as she said, “nearly a thousand people of all ages and sizes ... over uncertain mileage.” They traveled via Russia and then by ship, the *American Legion*: an exhausted Harriman wrote of “the dreary business of getting eight hundred and ninety-five passengers and their luggage ... aboard.” They were, moreover, a motley group of “Swedes, Finns, Norwegians, Danes, Estonians, Lithuanians, Dutch, French”—and even some Mexicans who had been in that part of the world when it fell. They crossed the Pacific and went around to New York, arriving on August 28, 1940. Norwegian Crown Princess Martha and her children accompanied Harriman, and the two women drew many headlines.

Cognizant of the probability of another fascist sneak attack, Harriman got her story, *Mission to the North* (1941), into print before Pearl Harbor—but like the warnings of many other women, hers was not sufficiently heeded. She lived out the war in Washington and returned to Norway in 1947 to be honored for her heroism. In 1963, just prior to his own death, President John F. Kennedy presented Daisy Harriman with a Citation of Merit for Distinguished Service. She lived another four years, dying at age ninety-seven in a world infinitely changed from that of her birth.

**See also:** decorations; European Theater of Operations; motor pools; Red Cross; refugees; Roosevelt, Eleanor

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## HAWAII

Although not yet a state, Hawaii made greater sacrifices for the United States during World War II than any of its extant states. Hawaiians were the only Americans to endure bombing by the Japanese.

Women were among the first missionaries from the mainland, who arrived in what then was called the Sandwich Islands in the 1820s. Joined by whalers and then by plantation growers—especially of sugar and pineapple—the islands became increasingly dominated by white men as the nineteenth century went on, with the result that Hawaiian women lost rights they traditionally exercised. Despite excellent governance under Queen Emma Kaleileonalani in the 1870s, American corporate interests overthrew Queen Lydia Kama'kaeha Lil'uokalani in the 1890s. The queen traveled to Washington, D.C., in an attempt to keep Hawaii for its natives, but Lili'uokalani's pleas were in vain. President William McKinley signed legislation creating the Hawaii Territory in 1900, with the act specifying that the territorial legislature could not grant the vote to either white or native women.

The plantation economy also meant tremendous immigration, mostly of young men from other islands and from Asia, who toiled in the fields. By 1900, the islands had 223 men for every 100 women, and the ratio among young people was even more unbalanced—eight unmarried men for each unmarried woman over age 15. The population was almost one-third Chinese and Japanese and many of these men sent for “picture brides” to join them: over 14,000 Asian women arrived in Honolulu between 1907 and 1923. These racially diverse residents demonstrated their democratic inclinations when all American women won vote in 1920: Hawaii elected its first woman to the territorial legislature in 1924, earlier than in most states. In 1933, his first year in office, President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed Hawaii's first female judge. Roosevelt was still in office on December 7, 1941, when the world changed for everyone, but especially for Hawaiians.

More than any other Americans, they felt the terror and trauma of World War II, as over 2,500 people died when Japan bombed Honolulu's Pearl Harbor. Navy nurse Agnes Shurr told author Diane Fessler:

I was asleep that Sunday morning on the hospital ship *Solace* out in the middle of Pearl Harbor ... “COMMAND BATTLE STATIONS!” was the first thing I heard ... We received casualties almost immediately ... We worked all through the day without stopping ... I could see the ships in the water and the smoke rolling up and hear the sounds of ships firing at

aircraft ... It began to dawn on me that we were really in a precarious and dangerous position in the harbor.

Her Navy Nurse Corps (NNC) colleague, Valera Vaubel Wiskerson, was on the ground, going to breakfast. She told Fessler: "I looked across the water at the hanger on Ford Island ... There was nothing but smoke where there had been ... planes sitting in a row." Civilian aviator Cornelia Fort had been in the air when, she said later in an article for *Woman's Home Companion*, that she "saw a military plane coming directly toward me ... plane. He passed so close under us that our celluloid windows rattled violently and I looked down to see the painted red balls" that were the symbol of Japan. Fort survived that violent day, but lost her life later in the war.

Less than six hours after the attack, the military began printing identification cards to be carried by civilians. The territorial governor surrendered Hawaii to the military at the request of President Roosevelt, and martial law was imposed. For the first time since the Civil War, the Constitution was suspended, as Hawaii's elected officials became subordinate to military commanders. Civilians had to accept rules such as a nightly blackout, an 8 p.m. curfew, censorship of mail and phone, as well as travel and employment restrictions that included not changing jobs or raising wages.

At least 1,441 Hawaiians of Japanese ancestry were imprisoned, but that number is relatively small in the context of the islands' large Japanese-American population. Hawaii's many mixed-race people and its traditional tolerance meant that Asians there did not feel the harsh discrimination experienced by those on the mainland, especially in California. As Nellie Osterland, who nursed at the Tripler Army Hospital, told Fessler, "the Japanese-Americans were very loyal. They were as mad as anyone else." Racism nonetheless was an inherent part of the era, and in an interview with writers La Forte and Marcello, Honolulu civilian Eliza Isaacs said revealingly:

One of the cashiers in the department where I worked was a little Japanese-American woman, and when they were outlining the areas that we could go in case of an attack, Jane said to me: "you can come to my house," because it was in that area ... [Others] kidded me about that—that a Japanese offered me a place to come in case of an attack.

Fears of a ground invasion by Japanese soldiers were realistic, and some thirty thousand Hawaiian residents evacuated within a month. Twenty thousand of them were military dependents—and because of the chaos in the area around the harbor, a few of these women did not yet know if their husbands had survived the bombing or if they were widows. Despite the outward flow of refugees, however, Hawaii's incoming population would soar during the next years. Hundreds of thousands of soldiers and sailors passed through on their way to and from Pacific battlefields, and hospitals on Oahu, Maui, and the Big Island soon were filled with convalescents.

In addition to the NNC women, the Army Nurse Corps (ANC) had eighty-two women stationed at three installations

on Oahu when the war began. According to author Judith A. Bellefaire, "Tripler Army Hospital was overwhelmed with hundreds of casualties suffering from severe burns and shock. The blood-spattered entrance stairs led to hallways where wounded men lay on the floor awaiting surgery... Appalling shortages of medical supplies became apparent... Doctors performing major surgery passed scissors back and forth from one table to another." The same was true at Schofield Hospital and at Hickam Field.

Soon these shortages would be corrected, however, and by the war's end, some military nurses had so much free time that they volunteered in civilian hospitals. The Red Cross and the Women's Army Corps (WAC) also soon stationed women in Hawaii, but women in the Navy's equivalent of the WAC, the WAVES, were not allowed to go overseas for most of the war. Congress finally authorized women in naval branches to go to Hawaii, Alaska, and the Caribbean in September 1944, and Lieutenant Commander Joy Bright Hancock flew to Honolulu to set up facilities there. Her autobiography shows the revolving door of travelers that Hawaii had become: at the airport, she said, "as I passed through the door I looked squarely into the eyes of my brother, Lt. Commander Cooper B. Bright, whom I had not seen in nearly two years. He had been serving aboard the aircraft carrier *USS Yorktown*, which had just come into Pearl Harbor." When she joined him for dinner on the ship:

I was told that I was the first WAVE aboard a combatant ship outside the continental limits of the United States ... On leaving the ship it was necessary for us to cross the hangar deck where a movie was being shown. A young sailor suddenly shouted, 'WAVE aboard!' and a lusty cheer rose from a thousand throats. With the same enthusiasm, the WAVES were welcomed when a little later they arrived in Hawaii.

Women Marines also arrived: by January, 1945, they had five officers and sixty enlisted women stationed at Pearl Harbor and Ewa. After a short course in San Diego, most were assigned to clerical work, but about one-third did aviation maintenance. Others drove in motor pools, and because few roads in Hawaii were yet paved, jockeying jeeps and trucks across mountainous, often muddy terrain required skill. Male Marines clearly were impressed that women did this well.

Paved roads were one of many ways in which the war eventually benefited Hawaiians. Aside from the economic benefits of the growth that resulted from its strategic role, many Hawaiian veterans were able to take advantage of the GI Bill of Rights to attend college and buy homes. Some took on leadership roles after completing their educations, weakening the domination of the white elite. Most supported admission to the Union—and after the war, Hawaiians elected strong statehood advocates as their nonvoting delegate to Congress, including a woman, Betty Farrington.

It took most of a decade, however, to overcome objections from Southern congressmen who did not want to admit a state with a nonwhite majority. The key factor in getting past their racism probably came from military strategists, who argued that statehood would strengthen the United States' hold on



this vital place in the Pacific. After approval by both houses of Congress and President Eisenhower in March, Hawaii residents voted for statehood in June, and Hawaii became a state on August 21, 1959.

*See also:* **Army Nurse Corps; Chinese-American Women; Fort, Cornelia; enemy aliens; GI Bill; Hancock, Joy Bright; Japanese Americans; motor pools; Navy Nurse Corps; Pearl Harbor; Red Cross; refugees; WACS; WAVES; Women Marines**

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## HERRICK, ELINORE MOREHOUSE (1896–1964)

Another of the high-ranking women who held unprecedented positions in the administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, Elinore Herrick was somewhat unusual in coming from the true working class. She was even more unusual as a shipyard executive during World War II.

She attended prestigious Barnard College briefly, but probably pregnant, left in 1916 to marry; she bore two children and divorced in 1921. Forced to support her sons without any particular skills, she ended up in a series of menial jobs. Finally, she moved from New York City to Buffalo, where she worked with DuPont's new rayon fabric and began her ascent from pieceworker to production manager. This was possible in part because of her innate mechanical aptitude: Herrick invented several labor-saving and safety devices on the job—the first of which was motivated by her own injuries from a defective machine.

DuPont joined other textile factories that moved South to take advantage of non-union labor, and Herrick was named production manager at a new factory near Nashville in 1923—a truly unusual promotion at that place and time. She was responsible for the training and output of some 1,800 workers, most of the women, on three shifts around the clock. Although she soon brought the production of these new employees up to the level of established plants, DuPont made it clear that there would be no more promotions, and so in 1927, Herrick left to resume her education. While supporting her family by running a boarding house, she earned an economics degree from Ohio's Antioch College. Age thirty-four at graduation, she went to work for the New York Consumers League, a group that also supported workers, and published *Women in Canneries* (1932) and *Cut Rate Wages* (1933).

Soon after the 1933 inauguration of Roosevelt and his New Deal Democrats, Herrick joined the labor relations staff that implemented the National Recovery Act. Her abilities were so obvious that she moved quickly through the ranks, and in 1935, was appointed to head a regional office of the National Labor Relations Board. Her New York area handled many more cases than other regions, as Herrick oversaw six thousand labor disputes involving more than a million workers.

When the nation entered World War II, Herrick's sons joined the military and she moved back into private enterprise as personnel director of Todd Shipyards, which employed over 140,000 workers in ten port cities. Keeping the armed forces supplied with ships during the war's naval battles was essential to victory, and Herrick's chief challenge was to integrate the necessary labor of women and racial minorities into the ancient male craft of shipbuilding. Although approaching fifty, she routinely worked sixteen hours a day to cover portions of three shifts that ran seven days a week.

Herrick also found time to write articles and make speeches recruiting women into defense industries. She wrote a book with Wisconsin Senator Robert LaFollette and worked closely with other powerful women, including Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins; Mary Anderson, who headed the Labor Department's Women's Bureau; and Margaret Hickey, representative for women on the War Manpower Commission, as well as Congresswoman Mary T. Norton, who chaired the House Labor Committee. When the war ended, Herrick followed up on her writing career by joining the *New York Herald Tribune*, which was published by Helen Rogers Reid.

There Herrick not only headed the personnel department, but also wrote on labor issues, including a book on supervising female employees. Her *Herald Tribune* editorials were balanced: although generally sympathetic to labor, she also understood how male union leaders undercut their cause with exclusionary attitudes, especially towards women. Newspaper colleague H.L. Mencken, who was famous for his disdain of liberals in general and female liberals in particular, nonetheless admired Herrick, calling her "a really amusing old gal." She retired to North Carolina in 1954 and died there a decade later.

*See also:* **Anderson, Mary; defense industries; employers/employment changes; Hickey, Margaret; labor force; Norton, Mary T.; Perkins, Frances; recruitment; ship-building; unions**

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## HICKEY, MARGARET WYNNE (1902–1994)

Women's representative on the misnamed War Manpower Board, Margaret Hickey also led the National Federation of Business and Professional Women (BPW), the era's most feminist organization.

Born in Kansas City, she grew up in Europe, where her father was a U.S. diplomat. She was educated by governesses and enjoyed a happy childhood until the family was forced to leave at the outbreak of World War I. Back in Missouri, teenage Margaret attended a private school and joined her mother, Elizabeth Wynne Hickey, in working for the right of women to vote. She began working at the *Kansas City Star* in 1921, but also studied towards her law degree. She later said that she was inspired by Florence Allen of Ohio: in 1922, Allen had organized women in a successful effort to become the first woman on a state supreme court.

Those women had been suffragists, and as their organizations dissolved after their 1920 victory, other groups filled the vacuum. The largest suffrage organization transformed itself into the League of Women Voters, while the early 1920s also saw the growth of the body that became the strongest for women's economic rights, the BPW. Its roots were in the Midwest, and Hickey was among its earliest members.

Like almost every female law student of that era, she experienced discrimination—including being barred from a debate society and having a professor ask her to absent herself when he discussed laws on rape—but she made good grades and graduated in 1928. Although the economy soon collapsed into the Great Depression, Hickey's family provided her with enough income that she could afford to take cases from poor clients. That, of course, increased her awareness of how many legal and especially economic rights women

still lacked. Winning the vote had been only that, and many state laws routinely discriminated against women in other ways, especially in matters of money.

She moved to the bigger city of St. Louis in 1931, where she implemented a program under the aegis of the YWCA to train women for employment, which led her to form her own business school in 1933. The Margaret Hickey School for Secretaries in downtown St. Louis became a long term success—with the result that she did not change her name when she married Joseph Strubinger in 1935.

A natural networker, Hickey also volunteered for the Red Cross and served on an advisory committee for the new Social Security program. That led her to Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins, and when World War II began, Perkins recommended Hickey to head the Women's Advisory Committee for the War Manpower Commission. Created early in 1942, the commission was charged with finding enough labor to fill the many defense industry jobs that would be essential to winning the war. Hickey traveled the country, speaking and writing about the need for women to leave the kitchen and enter the factory. Those many appearances before audiences of women led to her election as BPW president in 1944; its publication, *Independent Woman*, already was best at publishing war news aimed at women.

As the war wound down in the summer of 1945, Hickey joined Mary McLeod Bethune, Virginia Gildersleeve, and other women at the founding conference of the United Nations in San Francisco; with Eleanor Roosevelt, Hickey worked on the human rights section of the UN charter in 1946. That same year, she joined *Ladies Home Journal*, an important wartime magazine headed by Beatrice Gould that also featured brilliant columnist Dorothy Thompson. Hickey's role as public affairs editor for the magazine meant that she lived part-time in Philadelphia, where she received the Ben Franklin Award for Distinguished Public Service Journalism in 1953.

She served on the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in the 1950s, and when President John F. Kennedy began a national commission in 1963, he appointed Hickey to it. She continued her international work with the Red Cross and represented American women at international conferences, maintaining her activism well into the 1970s. Honored by many organizations, she donated her papers to the St. Louis campus of the University of Missouri and died at age ninety-two.

*See also:* **Bethune, Mary McLeod; Business and Professional Women's Clubs; defense industries; Gildersleeve, Virginia; Gould, Beatrice; Perkins, Frances; recruitment; Roosevelt, Eleanor; Red Cross; Thompson, Dorothy; United Nations; YWCA; War Manpower Commission**

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## HICKOK, LORENA (1893–1968)

Perhaps the closest friend of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt during the war years, writer Lorena Hickok grew up in circumstances much less privileged than Roosevelt's, but the two women shared the common bond of lonely childhoods. Hickok's father was abusive, and her youth was spent drifting between towns in the Upper Midwest. She became self-supporting at age fourteen in South Dakota, but nonetheless managed to finish high school—not something that every girl did in 1913.

She found her first journalistic job in Battle Creek, Michigan, then moved on to Milwaukee, and then to the *Minneapolis Tribune* in 1917. There a supportive boss gave her the chance to become a front-page reporter and promoted her to Sunday editor. She stayed with the paper until the onset of diabetes in 1926. After convalescence in San Francisco, she went to New York and served a year with the *Daily Mirror* before landing her most important journalistic job with the Associated Press in Washington, D.C. As in Minneapolis, Hickok's beat for the AP was a diverse mixture of politics, crime, and even sports. Much later, a *New York Times Magazine* story on her unfinished autobiography quoted Hickok's explanation of her employment strategy:

When I first went into the newspaper business I had to get a job as a society editor—the only opening available to women in most offices. Then I'd build myself up solidly with the city editor by volunteering for night assignments, get into trouble with some dowager who would demand that I be fired, and finally landed on the straight reportorial staff, which was where I had wanted to be.

When she focused on the 1932 election, AP's initial assignment held more than a touch of the society-editor stereotype: she covered Eleanor Roosevelt. Hickok soon realized, however, that Roosevelt did not fit the mold of traditional first ladies. Perhaps more than any other reporter or press agent, it was she who created the public perception of Eleanor Roosevelt as the caring friend of down-and-out Americans during the Great Depression. Soon Hickok was advising Roosevelt on press strategy to expand the New Deal message of her husband's campaign. The two women quickly became confidantes, with their friendship so apparent by the time of the inauguration that Hickok felt constrained to drop the pretense of objectivity and left the Associated Press.

She continued to use her reporter's skills, however, as she spent the years between 1933–36 working as a confidential investigator of the success of programs delivered by the Fed-

eral Emergency Relief Administration. Nearly eighty of her "reports"—in the form of personal letters to agency director Harry Hopkins—were published long after she was dead, as *One Third of a Nation: Lorena Hickok Reports on the Great Depression*. In a battered old car, she drove incognito from Maine to California, spelling out the results of programs intended to meet the needs of Americans abashed to find themselves indigent.

With the worst of the depression over by 1937, Hickok settled in New York as a publicist for the upcoming World's Fair. At its end, the Roosevelts invited her to live at the White House—and thus, from 1940 to 1945, all through the war years, she had an insider's access to the news. Meanwhile, she worked for the Democratic Party on women's issues, replacing Molly Dewson, who created that position.

The chief message, of course, was urging women to support the war to defeat fascism—and thereby to protect women's rights, which were much more limited in the enemy nations of Germany, Italy, and especially Japan. The relatively few war opponents who remained after Pearl Harbor were almost exclusively people who long had opposed the Roosevelts, and part of Hickok's job was to expose the dangerous partisanship of such zealots and to minimize their influence among women.

When Franklin Roosevelt died in 1945, just before V-E Day signaled the end to the war in Europe, Hickok accompanied Eleanor Roosevelt to the family's primary residence in Hyde Park, New York. She worked for the Democratic party of that state for five years, until diabetes forced her retirement. Yet, despite diminished eyesight, she continued to write. Between 1954 and 1962, she published six books of biography and history, including *Ladies of Courage* (1954), a valuable survey of the era's outstanding women that she coauthored with Roosevelt. Hickok was at work on other manuscripts, including an unfinished autobiography, when she died four years after the death of her beloved Eleanor.

**See also:** draft; British women; Dewson, Molly; opposition to the war; Roosevelt, Eleanor; Russian women; V-E Day

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## HIETT, HELEN (1913–1961)

Helen Hiett covered World War II for NBC Radio; her voice may have been the first feminine one to reach Americans with news of the fall of France.

Born in rural Illinois, she graduated from the University of Chicago with a degree in political science in 1934 and immediately went to Geneva and the League of Nations, the forerunner of the United Nations. After working and studying in Switzerland, she traveled through Italy, and in 1936, published a study of Italy's ongoing attack on the North African nation of Ethiopia. The next year, she moved to England to study at the London School of Economics.

There she networked with other Americans, and when radio hero Edward R. Murrow hired Mary Marvin Breckinridge to broadcast for CBS Radio, NBC hired Hiett. All of these broadcasters, including Murrow, were young—as was the profession—but all were exceptionally dedicated to wide dissemination of important international news. Because radio was only about two decades old, no previous major war had that possibility, and it proved a real positive in the ultimate victory of the democracies over the dictatorships.

Soon after World War II began with Germany's invasion of Poland in September, 1939, NBC sent Hiett to France, where she began regularly broadcasting "Paris Letter"—but the following summer, Hitler's troops invaded and Paris fell. His puppet government of French Nazis moved the capital away from Paris leftists, to the small town of Vichy in southern France; Hiett followed. She was there when Virginia Hall used her reports on Vichy for the *New York Post* as a cover for the spying that was Hall's primary purpose. Hiett's radio career was genuine, however, and she was one of the last to broadcast from occupied France.

The Gestapo forced her to flee to neutral Switzerland, and from there, she flew to neutral Spain. Her broadcast about the bombing of Gibraltar—the British island off the coast of Spain—won Hiett the 1940 National Headliners Award, the first time that other journalists granted this award to a woman. She continued to report other important stories, including a long-distance interview of American Red Cross nurses who were torpedoed on the *Maasdam*. Hiett's most famous broadcast probably was the news that Italians had hung their fascist dictator, Benito Mussolini, in 1943. She managed to publish two books in 1944 and also contributed a chapter to a book by the Overseas Press Club of America. She began it with:

When the refugee ship, crowded with 1,500 Soviet citizens, docked at Odessa in late June 1945 ... I was the only passenger who didn't get off the ship—but not the only one who didn't want to.

My fellow travelers belonged to the largest national group of war-displaced persons in Europe ... More than two and a half millions of them [Soviets] are jamming British and American collection centers in Western Europe ... We are picking them up at vast camps, feeding them army rations which include a full quota of candy, cigarettes, whisky, and beer, giving each one a complete outfit of new clothes, and transporting them back to the U.S.S.R. by rail, by road, by ship, and even by air ... Providing baby clothes...for these Russians has been easy, however, compared to seeing that they enjoy some of democracy's immaterial benefits while in our centers.

Hiett lived in Europe during much of the postwar era, and she continued her radio and television career after marriage and motherhood. Newspapers traditionally added her married name when they wrote about her role as director of a lecture forum under the aegis of the *New York Herald-Tribune*, which was published by Helen Rogers Reid. Helen Hiett Waller was employed in that role when she died as dramatically as she lived: her life ended at age forty-eight, when she was climbing in the French Alps.

*See also:* **Breckinridge, Mary Marvin; cigarettes; correspondents, war; food shortages; French women; Hall, Virginia; Maasdam; North Africa; radio; Red Cross; refugees; travel**

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## HIGGINS, MARGUERITE (1920–1966)

A journalistic star late in the war, Marguerite Higgins was younger than her colleagues, but the equal of anyone in her ferocious desire to get the story.

Born in Hong Kong to an American businessman and a French woman he met during World War I, Maggie Higgins grew up in less exotic circumstances in Oakland, California. Although her father descended into alcoholism, she managed to graduate from two prestigious institutions, the University of California at Berkeley and New York City's Columbia University's School of Journalism.

She thus not only had excellent credentials, but also entered the job market at a propitious time, when new opportunities were opening to women because of World War II. Higgins was one of many female reporters hired by Helen Rogers Reid of the *New York Herald-Tribune* and began her career in 1942, the first full year of the war. Marriage to philosopher Stanley Moore that same year did not deter her ambition: although they were together in Europe after he was

drafted and did not formally divorce until 1948, most of their time “together” was spent apart, and the marriage would be another war casualty.

Higgins retained her maiden name, and eager to cover the war, she persuaded Rogers to overrule male editors and allow her to go to the European Theater of Operations (ETO) in August of 1944. Based first in London, she went on to liberated Paris—where the language ability that she had learned from her mother proved valuable. Despite resistance from other reporters (including women) who thought she was too young, too brash, and especially too lacking in deference to their experience, she moved on to Germany as it fell in the spring of 1945. Following the Sixth Army, she filed stories of the war’s massive destruction and of war-weary Germans eager to surrender.

She got the big scoop that she craved at the Berlin suburb of Dachau, a name that meant little then, but now rings with dark meaning. Indisputably the first Americans to enter that concentration camp, Higgins joined with reporter Peter Furst to race across still-smoking battlefields, in the words of author Nancy Caldwell Sorel, to find such a “heavy smell of decay” that Higgins was nauseated. The story she filed for May 1, 1945, explained that fearful Nazi prison guards had run away:

There was not a soul in the yard when the gate was opened ... But the minute the two of us entered, a jangled barrage of “Are you Americans?” in about sixteen languages came from the barracks 200 yards from the gate. An affirmative nod caused pandemonium.

Tattered, emaciated men, weeping, yelling and shouting “Long live America!” swept toward the gate in a mob ... I happened to be the first through the gate, and the first person to rush up to me turned out to be a Polish Catholic priest ... who was not a little startled to discover that the helmeted, uniformed, begoggled individual he had so heartily embraced was not a man.

At age twenty-five, Maggie Higgins held front-page headlines all around the world. She won the New York Newspaper Women’s Award that year and also earned a military campaign ribbon for her effort. She went on to Hitler’s mountain retreat, Berchtesgaden, and was among the first to write about the art treasures uncovered there that had been stolen from occupied nations. She filed stories on the Nuremberg trials, which held high-ranking fascists responsible for these war crimes. She also wrote on the war for the age-appropriate but seemingly incongruous magazine, *Mademoiselle*.

In 1947, the *Herald Tribune* promoted her to Berlin bureau chief. That was not a happy position for her or for her subordinates: Higgins was too individualistic to be a good manager, and many older colleagues resented her. When she moved halfway round the world to the newspaper’s Far East Bureau in 1950, it was more a lateral transfer than promotion. Based in Tokyo, she seldom stayed in the office, and instead was on the first plane to Korea when war broke out there.

Higgins witnessed the death of the first of some fifty thou-

sand American soldiers killed in that undeclared war. Soon after her arrival, however, an army general ordered her out of the country because (according to author Julia Edwards) “there are no facilities for ladies at the front.” Although the 1950s would be much more conservative on women’s roles than the 1940s had been, much of the military remained aware that there had not been any facilities five years earlier during World War II, and General Douglas MacArthur, the chief Pacific commander, overturned the order. For Higgins, the incident was just one more case in a lifetime of dealing with the biases that both men and women held about attractive blondes.

Even her critics would agree that she repeatedly risked her life to report on Korea, and she earned one of six 1951 Pulitzer Prizes. A number of earlier women had won Pulitzers for reporting, but hers is credited as the first to a female correspondent actually in combat. She also published *The War in Korea: The Report of a Woman War Correspondent* that year and watched it climb the bestseller lists. Higgins returned to the United States amid wide acclaim, and according to her own records, received upwards of fifty awards.

In 1952, she married an American intelligence officer she had met in Berlin, Brigadier General William E. Hall. He followed her when the *Herald-Tribune* sent her to open an office in Moscow, but the Cold War of the 1950s meant that she soon was forced to close it. Higgins wrote of the experience in *Red Plush and Black Bread* (1955). In the same year, she published a retrospective of her career, *News is a Singular Thing*. Based in Washington, D.C., thereafter, she bore a son and a daughter when she was in her late thirties and continued to write magazine articles, many in women’s magazines, as well as books, including writing for children.

In 1963, after twenty-one years with the *Herald-Tribune*, she joined *Newsday*, the Long Island newspaper founded by Alicia Patterson. Higgins’ *Newsday* columns were syndicated in nearly a hundred other papers, and she found time to co-author *Overtime in Heaven: Adventures in the Foreign Service* (1964), with a friend, Peter Lisagor.

She also made ten trips to Vietnam, after that second major undeclared war began vaguely in the early 1960s. When she published *Our Vietnam Nightmare* (1965), Higgins said more than she knew: she was beginning to suffer the effects of a tropical disease that would kill her three years later, when she was age forty-five. Her death was painfully slow, and the children she left behind were just seven and eight years old.

**See also:** correspondents, war; decorations; European Theater of Operations; magazines; marriage; occupied Germany; occupied Japan; prisoners of war

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## HILL, BLANCHE WILBUR (1902–1987)

A businesswoman and aviator, Blanche Hill was just twenty-five when she founded Avion Corporation with her thirty-two-year-old husband, John Knudsen Northrop, in 1927. In 1933, Hill became the founding president of Northrop, an aviation development company that combined their names. Both Californians, they pioneered the aircraft industry that became so fundamental to the Los Angeles area—and to all Americans during World War II.

Even though the economy soon collapsed into the Great Depression, they continued to innovate and test ideas. The company is credited with building the first all-metal aircraft, an important transformation from the Wright Brothers prototype built of light woods. Future mergers, however, would mean that Hill's name was dropped; it would be Northrop Aircraft Corporation when better-known women such as Amelia Earhart and Jacqueline Cochran flew the planes Hill helped develop. Olive Ann Beech played a similar role with Beech Aircraft, which merged with today's well-known Raytheon Corporation. As the industry became larger and more traditional in corporate structure, these pioneering wife/husband teams nearly have been forgotten.

Blanche Hill instead turned her attention to another aspect of aviation, becoming the founding president of Aeronautical Industry Technical Institute. Another innovative idea, it was one of the first schools to train workers for the aviation industry. That educated work force also was important contribution that ultimately helped win the war. Although the skills of female pilots were not nearly as well utilized as they might have been, with only the small and quasi-military WASP open to them, female instructors were common. Many men learned their flying fundamentals from women—especially from those known as “Link Ladies,” who demonstrated flight simulation to novice male air cadets.

Blanche Hill died in Pasadena, California at age eighty-five, six years after Northrop died. Her nationally syndicated obituary called her “an aviation entrepreneur and pilot who founded two aircraft companies and a technical training school.”

*See also:* **aircraft workers; Air WACs; Cochran, Jacqueline; Link Ladies; WASP; under-utilization**

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## HISPANIC WOMEN

Little about their heritage encouraged Hispanic-American women to be visible participants in World War II. At that time, most lived and died in the southwestern part of the United States, where their culture encouraged family-centered, non-public lives for women. One indication of this is the fact that the state with the largest proportion of Hispanic Americans, New Mexico, was the only western state that did not grant women the vote prior to the 19th Amendment of the U.S. Constitution that guaranteed it to all women. A second reflection of traditional seclusion is the fact that women did not vote in other Spanish-speaking nations at the time of World War II.

Another difference from today is that in the 1940s, the Hispanic population in the United States was much smaller; by far the majority of modern Hispanic Americans have arrived since immigration law was revised in 1965. Although Puerto Ricans were U.S. citizens, few came to the mainland then: their status was even more uncertain than of residents of the Alaska Territory and the Hawaii Territory, and the major wave of Puerto Rican movement to the mainland occurred after the war. Even in exceptional places such as Tampa, where large numbers of Spanish-speakers arrived in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, that trend ended with World War I and the 1924 Immigration Quota Act.

Beyond that, the economy was so bad in the 1930s that the United States actually lost population. Many European immigrants voluntarily returned to their Old World homes, but this was not the case for several hundred thousand Mexicans and Mexican Americans who were forced out of the United States. According to author Frank de Varona, “nearly 13,000 were ejected” from Los Angeles. Texas sent many more across the Rio Grande, with “200,000 repatriated in 1932 alone.” That was the last year of the administration of Republican Herbert Hoover, but the Hispanic population remained small under Democrat Franklin Roosevelt during the remainder of the decade.

Still another factor that limited Hispanic involvement in World War II was that there was relatively little participation from other Spanish-speaking nations. Mexico did join Canada and the United States in a formal declaration of war, but South American nations—like their mother countries of Spain and Portugal—remained neutral. Many Latin Americans of the governing class quietly sympathized with Europe's fascists, and indeed, in the postwar years, German Nazis sought and found shelter there, especially in Argentina, Brazil, and Cuba.



Despite these inhibiting factors, Hispanic-American women were like other American women in using the war as a wedge into the wider world. Some had already displayed strong labor leadership during the 1930s. In Tampa, Cuban-American women led strikes against cigar factories, and in San Antonio, Mexican-American women who shelled pecans for candy manufacturers went on strike; in both cases, however, their cause would fade as machinery replaced them. Los Angeles women were more successful; they managed to double their pay in garment factories. These leadership examples were valuable, however, when the war began and minorities all across the nation suddenly found themselves in a reversed role: employers who would not have accepted a job application from them a few years earlier now begged them to come to work.

This was especially true in southern California, where aircraft manufacture and other defense industries grew astronomically. Hispanic women also worked in munitions plants, a high-risk industry that hired a great many minority women. The Army's Chemical Warfare Service, for example, built the Rocky Mountain Arsenal near Denver, and writer Frances Martin said:

The arsenal had no trouble finding unskilled female workers. There was a surplus of Negro and Hispanic women, but neither group had factory experience. A plus side of the personnel picture was that illiteracy was very low and the average level of formal education was high.

Prior to construction, it was estimated that 10 percent of the employees at Rocky Mountain would be women. Readily available records do not give the total actual hire figure, but it was certainly more than the original estimate ... By June 1943, when the job market was tighter, the arsenal was forced to take in those workers whom it may not have normally taken, and the percentage jumped to 72.5.

Termination figures rose as well, however. Absenteeism at Rocky Mountain, while a problem, was not as bad as it was at other arsenals [in non-Hispanic areas]. Because workers were forbidden to take vacations, they saw little reason to accumulate leave. Nevertheless, personnel ... representatives assiduously counseled absentees, and nurses were sent out to check on those using sick leave.

The concept of sick leave would have been new to most Hispanic women, nor did most such social workers have a true understanding of the cultural community they aimed to assist; they usually mixed their services with more than a little condescension. Nonetheless, the war's need for non-traditional employees helped bring the two worlds closer.

In addition to private businesses, the federal government also reached out to minorities for general war participation. More attention went to African Americans than to Hispanic Americans, but the Office of War Information (OWI) paid some heed, including the use of Spanish-language advertising in the Southwest. One example was a poster that encouraging war support with: "America Unida—Es La Paz del Mundo," or "a united America is the peace of the world." The 1943 "zoot suit" riots brought additional attention. Navy sailors in Los Angeles saw the flashy style, with

its gangster-like appearance, as an invitation to attack the young Mexican-American men who wore them, and fighting continued for several days, with violent outbreaks as far away as Philadelphia. Authorities realized that they had to begin race-relations education, and the State Department set up a Spanish-Speaking Peoples Division.

More important than the zoot suit troubles—but much less publicized—was the State Department's establishment of an early form of a guest-worker program. Called *bracerios* by Mexicans, it aimed to allow non-citizens to legally replace American farm workers who had gone to war. The Women's Land Army was doing some of this—and British women were drafted for farm work—but U.S. agriculturists seem to find it inconceivable that American women could replace enough men and therefore reached out to the Mexicans they had banished across the border a decade earlier. The two governments worked out conditions of labor and pay, but Mexico refused to send workers to Texas, where they had been so badly mistreated in the past. Instead, some went as far as Wyoming, where they harvested sugar beets used to make explosives. Between 1942 and 1947, approximately two hundred thousand *braceros* came to the United States, more than half of them to California.

Although Hispanic-American women did not have role models on the scale of, for example, Mary McLeod Bethune for African Americans or Madame Chiang Kai-shek for Chinese Americans, some may have taken pride in Sylvia de Bettencourt, a war correspondent for *Correio de Manhã* (*Morning Mail*), a daily newspaper based in Rio de Janeiro. Bettencourt was the only woman writing for an Hispanic newspaper who was credentialed by the U.S. military as a reporter authorized to follow the battle lines. Another role model was Concha Ortiz y Pino, a Democratic legislator in New Mexico who successfully pushed for education in the Spanish language. She was exceptional, however, as New Mexico's other female elected officials of the era had Anglo names. Indeed, Hispanic women there and elsewhere in the Southwest arguably had been more powerful a century earlier than they were in the 1940s, when increased Anglo population moved in and diminished their strength in local decision making.

Perhaps the biggest change that the war brought to Latinas was the fact that U.S.-born Latinos, like all American males, were drafted. When men with names like Alvarez and Garcia served in the same platoon as men named Allen and Godwin, both cultures naturally learned from each other. Indeed, many Latinos did not wait to be drafted, as more than other ethnic groups, they volunteered. One reason for doing so was that a Latino born in Mexico acquired citizenship by joining the military—and the citizenship process would be eased for his Latina wife.

Latinos also served with exceptional valor: seventeen Congressional Medals of Honor, the nation's highest decoration, were awarded to Mexican-American men. Some had volunteered before the U.S. entry into the war and were in the Philippines when Japan bombed there at Christmas, 1941. Army nurses on Bataan and Corregidor mentioned their

Spanish-speaking skills as valuable in the critical situations that nurses encountered every day. By the war's end, about a half-million Hispanics served in the military, four-fifths of them of Mexican heritage. Virtually all, however, were male: Mattie Treadwell, the premier historian of the Women's Army Corps (WAC), did not even mention Hispanics when she discussed minority women. A rare memoir of a Hispanic WAC, Puerto Rican Carmen Garcia Rosada, has yet to be translated from Spanish.

Although few Hispanic women traveled because of the war, their men often came home no longer content to scratch a living from the Arizona desert or the Colorado mountains: with their families, they moved to Phoenix or Denver or beyond, profoundly changing not only their own lives, but also those of Latinas. Women benefited indirectly from the fact that these veterans had preferential treatment for jobs and were eligible for the GI Bill's benefits in housing, education, and business loans. Many family enterprises resulted, especially in southern California, that improved life for them and for their nation.

In the strongly Hispanic state of New Mexico, the war's biggest change was the creation of its biggest weapon, the atomic bomb. Scientists, many of them Europeans or second-generation Jewish immigrants, moved to the Los Alamos desert to implement the bomb. These cosmopolitan people, along with artists who followed famed Georgia O'Keefe to the Southwest, brought increased interest and respect for the area and its Hispanic residents.

The same was true in other parts of the Southwest. Arizona saw a huge increase in wartime population as troops trained there for combat in the similar clime of North Africa. Many more soldiers and sailors traveled through southern California to ship out to the Pacific Theater of Operations from San Diego or Los Angeles. They eventually returned to Minnesota or Ohio, told their wives and sweethearts about the near-perfect weather they had discovered, and moved in among long-resident Hispanics.

Soon these newcomers were building and decorating their homes in Spanish style, and soon people who had never heard of tacos would believe that they always had been part of standard American cuisine. Five decades after the war's end, the profundity of change for Hispanic women could be seen in the 1996 election, when a powerful white Los Angeles congressman lost his seat to a young woman named Loretta Sanchez.

**See also:** absenteeism; African-American women; aircraft workers; artists; Bataan; Corregidor; correspondents, war; defense industries; draft; GI Bill; Manhattan Project; munitions; Native American women; Pacific Theater of Operations; posters; veterans; Women's Land Army

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### HOARDING

When stores opened on Monday, December 8, 1941, after the Sunday bombing of Hawaii's Pearl Harbor, the first war action of a large number of American women was to buy sugar. They did so because sugar was scarce in World War I—partly because war disrupts civilian shipping and partly because it is diverted to other uses, especially in making explosives. As writer Ann Starrett explained, "sugar cane makes molasses; molasses makes ethyl alcohol; and alcohol makes the powder which fires the guns ... [and] not only gunpowder, but torpedo fuel, dynamite, nitrocotton, and thousands of militarily important chemicals." After what *New Republic* called "a wild wave of buying," the next month's sugar prices were 35 percent higher than they had been the previous year.

The same scenario replayed with coffee. Caffeine addicts soon stripped grocery shelves, assuming that because coffee cannot be grown in the United States, the same importation

factors would apply. Actual consumption of cups of coffee logically should have fallen as huge numbers of men left for overseas fronts, but instead annual consumption figures for 1942 rose from 13 pounds to 16 pounds per American—obviously not because there were more coffee drinkers, but instead as a result of hoarding. Such hoarding, of course, made it difficult for the poor to compete with the rich in buying their fair share of coffee, and so it was rationed in November, following the rationing of sugar in May.

As with so many other things, the United States had the benefit of Britain's experience in establishing a rationing system. Many of the fundamentals of British life always had to be imported to that tiny island, and when the war in Europe began in 1939, German submarines torpedoed British ships—leaving Britons without their traditional tea or sugar, to say nothing of the industrial necessities of rubber and gasoline. Because prices always rise when there is a shortage of a desirable item, the government implemented rationing to distribute the newly-scarce goods fairly. To buy a rationed item, a woman (then as now, most shoppers were women) needed to present a ration stamp along with her cash, with the stamp demonstrating that she had not already bought her fair share.

Rationing was successful at holding down prices and making necessities available to all. Most people understood the common need and did not try to cheat, but some stockpiled items that they expected to be rationed or bought on the black market from suppliers who ignored the law. One grocer, for example, told Starrett with distress of the “many people who come in here and *brag* they have 300 pounds” of sugar. Many of these braggers no doubt thought of themselves as wisely prudent, but *Life* dubbed them “me first Americans” and accused them of “fighting the war in the grocery store.” It detailed other cases of hoarders who prioritized their own needs over those of others:

In San Francisco ... a small run on vinegar developed when a man in a restaurant was overheard saying there would be a vinegar shortage. Denver had its first fire last week from an explosion caused by hoarded gasoline. Just before coffee rationing began, some people in Atlanta, Ga. discovered that there was a lot of coffee on the shelves of Monroe, Walton County, 40 miles away. They descended on the little town (burning up precious rubber to get there), swept it clean, and left the local people coffeeless for days.

Clothing and shoes also were rationed, in both cases because of hoarding early in the war. Especially shoe rationing, according to the head of the Office of Price Administration, was imposed partly because of military needs for leather, but also because of hoarding: some people, said OPA chief Prentiss Brown, bought “a dozen pairs or more.” The most likely single item to be hoarded, however, was women's silk stockings—or, even better, new and more fashionable nylon hosiery. Often it was men who purchased these as gifts for women they hoped to attract. Patricia Lochridge, who also was a credentialed war correspondent, did an incognito investigation of hoarding and black markets. She found that the

most likely place to buy nylons without a ration coupon was “in expensive restaurants, bars, etc.” Lochridge added:

Nylons seem to have almost disappeared in the South, but I found a pair for \$5 at a liquor store in Houston. In another Southern city, I met a most distinguished ... bank president whose desk drawer was full of nylons at \$5 a pair to his best depositors.

Good pay for women in defense industries at that point ranged between 60 and 90 cents per hour, so a \$5 pair of stockings could be the equivalent of a full day's pay—or at least a \$100 for most women today. Men who violated the rules to keep a stockpile of nylons in their desk or behind a liquor counter probably wanted more than merely to resell them. Indeed, the available evidence, both anecdotal and statistical, shows that men were more likely than women to justify themselves as exceptions to rationing rules and to illegally hoard scarce items—even items they could not personally use, such as nylons.

In general, though, about four of every five Americans seem to have adhered strictly to the rules. Some, of course, did not hoard because they could not afford to buy more than needed, but the nature of era's economy also helped to enforce a fair system. In that time of greater small-town residence and before the existence of many large, anonymous chain stores, clerks often knew their customers personally: they had gone to school together or attended the same church or had enough other things in common that neither would risk their community reputation by trying to cheat. Because gasoline and tires were rationed, it also was difficult to travel out of the neighborhood network in what might be a futile search for someone willing to cheat.

Beyond that, women wealthy enough to hoard also were likely to have domestic servants—and they would know if she had a stash of new shoes in her bedroom or a pantry too full of canned goods or sugar or coffee. Especially if that cook or maid had family members in danger of death, she might reasonably report her boss to the rationing authorities. That happened, but not often, and by the war's end, there was little problem with hoarding. This may have been because it was too great a risk to personal reputations or because people had learned to trust the rationing system or because—in the best of worlds—the public accepted the message that advertisers and the Office of War Information constantly repeated: hoarding was selfish and would prolong the war.

**See also:** advertising; British women; conservation; defense industries; domestic workers; food shortages; munitions; Office of Price Administration; Office of War Information; pay; Pearl Harbor; rationing

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## HOBBY, OVETA CULP (1905—1995)

Oveta Culp Hobby holds at least three separate places in the history of American women: she organized and commanded the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) in 1942; she was the first secretary of the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW), and as such, followed Labor Secretary Frances Perkins as the second woman on the Cabinet; and finally, as a businesswoman and newspaper publisher, recognized by her journalistic colleagues as Publisher of the Year in 1960.

Born in Killeen, Texas, to an exceptionally supportive family, she was a prodigy who, after studying at Mary Hardin, Baylor College's women's division, passed the state bar examination and was an assistant city attorney in Houston by age twenty-one. At the same time, she also served as parliamentarian for the state legislature in Austin, holding that position from 1926 to 1931. This astonishing young woman also did a major codification of state banking laws and published a book on parliamentary procedure, *Mr. Chairman* (1937).

Oveta Culp was twenty-six when she married William P. Hobby, an older man who had been governor of Texas and currently was the publisher of the *Houston Chronicle*. She bore a son, named for his father, and a daughter, Jessica, while also carving out a place for herself at the newspaper. Hobby learned the business by moving up the ranks from researcher to executive vice-president by 1938.

When war broke out in Europe the next year, prescient Americans began preparing for that eventuality. In the summer of 1941, Hobby took one of the famous \$1-per-year jobs that President Franklin Roosevelt offered top policy advisers; she headed the new Women's Interest Division of the Army Public Relations Bureau. Author Edith Aynes wrote that "both Hobbys had been active in the presidential campaigns of President Roosevelt," and historian Mattie Treadwell explained that Oveta Hobby was "virtually drafted" for this

position by the president. Against War Department resistance, her job was "to furnish soldiers' wives and mothers with information that would reassure them about the living conditions of their drafted relatives."

She had agreed to stay only a short while, but when the United States entered the war six months later, Hobby was a natural to head a new army corps for American women. The legislation for the WAAC (later WAC) had been written by Representative Edith Nourse Rogers of Massachusetts, and it waited only for congressional attention in the chaotic months after Pearl Harbor. President Roosevelt signed the authorizing bill on May 15, 1942, and the corps was underway.

It was a historic breakthrough into an almost totally male preserve. Although the U.S. Navy and the Marine Corps had sworn in female members briefly during World War I, the Army had not done so. Its only female unit was the Army Nurse Corps (ANC), which had existed since 1901, but the ANC not only was completely segregated by gender and occupation, its members were treated differently from male soldiers in many ways. Hobby's WAACs, therefore, had no American precedent, and in the face of great odds, she used her tremendous executive abilities to pull off one of the great success stories of the war.

The barriers that faced her were many. They started with her age: at thirty-seven, some believed she was too young, while others objected to the fact that she would be leaving her children, still under ten, for this demanding position. Less was said about this deviance from women's traditional roles, however, than about the fact that Hobby was from Texas: leaders of emerging civil rights organizations were openly skeptical that any Southerner could be fair to African-American women.

She therefore was careful to include a proportionate number of black women in the first class of officers who trained at Fort Des Moines, Iowa. Working with Mary McLeod Bethune and other African Americans, Hobby made a huge effort to identify qualified black candidates and invite them to join the inaugural class. Throughout the war, she continued to work against racial discrimination in Military Occupational Specialties (MOS), constantly battling the assumptions of many that of course women, and especially black women, would be cooks or bakers or laundry workers. Because of her strength on this issue, Army women soon served in literally hundreds of MOS slots—while the Navy's new WAVES, headed by Massachusetts' Mildred McAfee, did not accept African Americans at all until the last year of the war.

Another genuine achievement—and an interminable headache for Hobby—was to ensure that her women would not be treated as "camp followers" whose main purpose was to entertain men. Again, many prurient minds believed that this was the true purpose of the corps, and especially in the first year, Hobby and her organization were targets of appreciable sexual slander. She had to respond repeatedly, even to theologians who believed these rumors and discouraged women from joining. In fact, WACs had a substantially lower venereal disease rate than that of the female civilian

Oveta Culp Hobby, first director of the Women's Army Corps, addresses a press conference in November 1942. The map in the background reflects the fact that according to the *New York Times*, "90%" of the corps's members "prefer overseas duty." *Courtesy of National Archives*



population. The kind of woman who joined the corps instead was so devoted to the cause that male officers were amazed at how few disciplinary problems they encountered, and a planned unit of female military police never was created because there was no need for it. Yet Hobby probably spent more time defending the morality of her women than she spent on any other issue.

Time, in fact, was her greatest need. Especially in the early days of organization, when every little decision meant setting policy, Hobby routinely worked fourteen hours a day, seven days a week. Especially when she traveled to inspect troops or speak at recruitment rallies, she often had nights with just a couple of hours of sleep. By 1944, she was hospitalized several times for exhaustion—but fearing that this would damage the morale of her troops and hurt the women's reputation for management ability, she kept the sad state of her health secret from all but top assistants.

The unfortunate result was that when she resigned in July 1945, after the war in the European Theater of Operations (ETO) was over, but while the Pacific war was still ongoing, much of the media complained that she was a slacker. Her troops did not: Hobby was nearly universally popular with her subordinates, and the "nine old women" who had been her founding officers were highly capable of carrying on. One of them, Mary A. Hallaren, took over and had no difficulty seeing the corps through to September's victory in the Pacific.

While the press criticized her for resigning, few noted that the Army had given her little incentive to stay, for Oveta Culp Hobby's military experience is a case study in institutional sexism. Charged with creating a military corps comparable to nothing extant and with no models other than the brief British experience—which was fundamentally different because Britain drafted women—Hobby nonetheless managed in three years to recruit, train, and supervise some one hundred thousand women at stations all around the globe.

For this, she received no rank at all until 1943, when she was made a colonel—a status given to men who sometimes command no more than five hundred soldiers. For most of her military career, she was addressed as "Mrs. Hobby" or "Director Hobby," and although there was some talk in Congress of making her a general, the War Department did not encourage it. Throughout it all, Hobby was gracious, following the chain of command and never pointing out the personal unfairness. When she returned to Houston at age forty, *Time* reported that she said simply, "My mission has been completed."

She was not retiring, however, but instead taking on new challenges in the new field of electronic communications. Hobby acquired several television stations, and when her husband died in 1964, became the publisher of the *Houston Chronicle*. She also served on several corporate boards, including companies in the food and the insurance industries, and was a leader in the new Corporation for Public Broadcasting.

Having established a good working wartime relationship with ETO commander Dwight D. Eisenhower, Hobby campaigned for him in the 1952 presidential election. He recalled her to Washington when he won and soon appointed her to head the new Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW). Eisenhower knew that Hobby had the ability to build a new organization from scratch, and she worked to combine the disparate federal bureaus that dealt with educational and social matters—including the massive Social Security Administration—into HEW. More than two decades later, Congress would recognize that this was overload and split HEW into the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services, but Hobby had it all—and at a time when many conservatives wanted no federal attention at all to any of these issues.

In this era of increasing right-wing dominance, Hobby nonetheless appointed an African-American woman, Jane M. Spaulding, as her chief assistant. The new department had

some thirty-five thousand employees—appreciably smaller than the WAC—but a budget of \$5.4 billion that was directly under her control, unlike her situation at the Pentagon. As with the WAC, she carried HEW from a concept to a reality and gave it the foundation for success—although that might not have been the consensus of opinion in 1955, when controversy swirled around her.

The nation was experiencing polio epidemics every summer in that era, a disease that heartbreakingly killed or crippled children and young adults. When Dr. Jonas Salk, working under the aegis of the new March of Dimes, promised a polio vaccine in an HEW news conference with Hobby, the nation was hopeful but also anxious. The firestorm of controversy would center on two questions: was the vaccine safe, and would it be fairly distributed? The answer to the first became clouded when a California laboratory distributed contaminated vaccine that resulted in several deaths. Although Hobby took immediate action, she received more than her share of unfocused blame. On the question of distribution, Hobby got confused cues from the president and his Republican Party. Eisenhower, as a man who always had enjoyed free medical care from the military, thoughtlessly promised that every child would be vaccinated free of charge—while also telling his physician and pharmaceutical friends that there would be no federal control of a privately-manufactured product.

In the end, safety questions meant that there had to be at least some federal control, and the controversy was well on its way to an end when Hobby resigned in July. Her ostensible reason was that her husband was ill, but many believed that the polio vaccine quandary was the real cause. No evidence pointed to Eisenhower asking for her resignation and she probably could have ridden out the political storm, but in choosing to resign, she allowed HEW to quiet the debate and get on with vaccinating the nation's children.

A decade after her retirement from the WAC, Hobby again returned to Texas. Age fifty then, she lived there the next forty years, focusing on her businesses and watching her son rise to lieutenant governor, an exceptionally powerful position in Texas. By 1983, *Texas Business* listed her as the only woman among the twenty most-powerful Texans. She sold the *Chronicle* that year for approximately \$100 million and concentrated on philanthropies, including the Eleanor Roosevelt Memorial Foundation. Hobby earned more than a dozen honorary degrees from universities, as well as many other awards, including being the only member of the wartime WAC honored with the Distinguished Service Medal.

*See also:* **African-American women; Army Nurse Corps; Bethune, Mary McLeod; British women; camp followers; decorations; draft; electronics industry; European Theater of Operations; Fort Des Moines; Halleren, Mary A.; McAfee, Mildred; Military Occupational Specialty; Perkins, Frances; Pacific Theater of Operations; rank; recruitment; Rogers, Edith Nourse; Roosevelt, Eleanor; “slander campaign”; Women’s Army Corps**

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## HOGAN, ROSEMARY (1912–1964)

The first American woman to be seriously wounded by enemy fire during World War II, Oklahoma’s Rosemary Hogan was called “Red” by her friends. After nursing school, she joined the Army Nurse Corps (ANC) and made it her lifelong career. She arrived in the Philippines in December 1941—just before the Japanese bombed Manila at Christmas.

Like other women in both the ANC and the Navy Nurse Corps (NNC), Hogan evacuated from the city as the military retreated down the Bataan peninsula. A senior surgical nurse, she led others in setting up at least a thousand “beds” in the jungle: as wounded men poured into the open-air “hospital,” they often recovered from their injuries in triple-decker hammocks or even on the ground. Her colleague Juanita Redmond noted the scene in her diary: “In the Surgery Ward, I might see Hogan clambering up a crude ladder to reach a patient on the top of a three-decker.”



Hogan was wounded when the Japanese attacked during the midst of surgery on Easter Monday. Redmond said:

The first wave of bombers struck us. In the Orthopedic ward nurses and corpsmen began to cut the traction ropes so that the patients could roll out of bed if necessary, broken bones and all. In my ward several of the men became hysterical ...

A thousand-pound bomb pulverized the bamboo sheds, smashed the tin roofs into flying pieces; the iron beds broke jaggedly like paper matches. We worked wildly ... the air rent by the awful screams of the new-wounded and dying, trees still crashing. I saw Rosemary Hogan being helped from her ward. Blood streamed from her face and shoulder.

Hogan was sent to the nearby island of Corregidor to recover, but soon other nurses joined her there as the Japanese took Bataan. When Corregidor also appeared to be falling in May, Hogan was among the women fortunate enough to be evacuated. Her plane to Australia, however, developed problems and was forced to land on Mindanao Island. All aboard were captured by the Japanese, and Hogan soon rejoined her Corregidor sisters as a prisoner of war in Manila. Like others, including civilian women, she lived there until February 1945, when American forces liberated the Philippines. Then, she finally received the Purple Heart and other decorations that she had earned three years earlier.

In some ways, the worst of the war came after she returned to safety. Hogan explained in an article for a then-popular weekly magazine, *Liberty*:

As the folks back home in Chattanooga, Oklahoma, got the story, the Japs had chopped off my arms, cut out my tongue, and left me pregnant. Just to vary the theme, someone said my legs had been amputated ...

I never heard the ghastly rumors about myself until I had been home a week. Then a girl friend said:

"I guess you've heard all the frightful things that have been said about you?"

I had not, but it seemed that an officer from Fort Sill, Oklahoma, where I had been stationed before the war, called this girl and asked her, "Did you hear what happened to Rosemary? ... I know it's true," he said, "because I checked it."

Someone else said I was seen coming home on a bus. I had a cape around me—to cover my mutilation and shame ... I learned that this same nurse-on-a-bus story went all around the country.

None of that was true, of course, and Hogan continued with her military career. After the postwar creation of the Air Force, she transferred to its nursing corps and served as Chief Nurse at several stateside hospitals, retiring from Virginia's Langley Air Force Base as a full colonel. The military long discriminated against women in terms of rank, but she became one of the first four women to achieve that rank in the regular army. She married a man of lower rank, Air Force Major Arnold Lucero, and retired to San Antonio, Texas.

Colonel Rosemary Hogan was honored upon her death with burial at Arlington National Cemetery.

**See also:** *Army Nurse Corps; Bataan; Corregidor; decorations; Navy Nurse Corps; Pacific Theater of Operations; rank*

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## HOKINSON, HELEN ELNA (1893–1949)

A cartoonist for *The New Yorker* and other popular magazines during war years, Helen Hokinson was particularly good at gently poking fun of upper-class people, especially women, whose self-image of the sacrifices they made for the war far exceeded any reality.

Born in Mendota, Illinois, she began her career as a child. She carried a sketchbook with her, and when ideas occurred, she drew them: by high school, she had two sketchbooks worthy of preservation. After graduation in 1913, she studied art at Chicago's famed Academy of Fine Arts and went on to New York City. As in Chicago, she supported herself there by illustrating advertisements for department stores while attempting to publish her comics.

It was the 1925 beginning of *The New Yorker* that changed Hokinson's life: she submitted a drawing, was immediately accepted, and spent the rest of her life creating some seventeen hundred cartoons for that sophisticated magazine. She published her first book of cartoons, *Are You Going to Buy a Book?* in 1931, the same year that she began partnering with James Reid Parker. He specialized in captions, and she in the art, and they jointly published a series called "Dear Man" in *Ladies Home Journal*—which was published, after 1935, by Beatrice Gould.

Hokinson's *My Best Girls* (1941) came out just before World War II began. Even though war rarely is humorous, she nonetheless found rich material in its new topics, especially the changes in home life created by the war. For example, *Life* published her 1942 series on the foibles of Victory Gardens, with the first featuring one of Hokinson's perennially plump society ladies majestically headed out to the garden, complete with hat and fur stole, while a typically tired manservant laden with tools trailed behind her.

Another favorite wartime target for lampooning was the hardship that polite-society ladies endured when their domestic servants left them for better jobs in defense industries. Their trials in comprehending the rationing system, which did not allow them to buy all that they could afford to buy, provided still more fodder. Hoarding of rationed goods, too,



The caption on this Helen Hokinson cartoon for the *New Yorker* read, “They’re all staying for supper, Nora. Any inspirations?” Unexpected guests were indeed a problem during this time of rationed food. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

was held up for ridicule—but at the same time, Hokinson managed to sink her barbs so softly that the reader found them funny, not mean.

She was not at all a political cartoonist of the one-dimensional, cruel sort: instead she explicated the confusion with which an excessively-sheltered woman might well meet the war. The misguided efforts of her befuddled targets invariably conveyed their good intentions, and readers felt more pity than anger at their failure to cope with the war’s exigencies. Hokinson was a master of subtle complexity, managing somehow to make her ladies lovable and endearingly obliviousness to their self-centered lives.

In 1944, the last, most terrible year of worldwide war, Hokinson provided the illustrations for Emily Kimbrough’s best-selling book of nostalgia, *How Dear to My Heart* (1944). Four years later, Hokinson followed up with *When Were You Built?* (1948), a cartoon collection commenting on the postwar world. She doubtless would have joined other staff of *The New Yorker* in celebrating its twenty-fifth anniversary in 1950—but she was on her way to one of many speaking engagements at women’s clubs when she was killed on November 1, 1949. The plane in which she was a passenger collided over Washington, D.C., with a military plane training Bolivian pilots and plummeted into the Potomac River.

Helen Hokinson left between enough material that her literary heirs published three more books, bringing laughter to the postwar world. Partner James Reid Parker provided memoirs with the first and the last, in 1950 and 1956.

**See also:** best sellers; defense industries; domestic servants; Gould, Beatrice; hoarding; magazines; rationing; Victory Gardens

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## HOME ECONOMICS

At the time of World War II, the field of home economics was about a half-century old. The late nineteenth century brought a surge of sciences, as under the influence of Darwin and Darwinians, academia began to systematize scientific methods of thought. The trend especially was evident in the emergence of social sciences such as psychology and sociology, and home economics sought to be part of this movement.

Its academic roots were laid with the advice and “household hint” books that existed in America since its late colonial days. As educational opportunities for girls increased after the Civil War, attention to subjects that they needed to know for their presumed occupation of homemaking also increased. Educator Catharine Beecher, daughter of famed clergyman Henry Ward Beecher, was one of the early advocates of home economics, while Ellen Richards, a true scientist on the staff of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, was its most important synthesizer.

When the U.S. Department of Agriculture authorized nu-

tritional research in 1894, the movement began to formalize; the American Home Economics Association formed in 1908; and the first federal monies definitely intended for women came with the Smith-Lever Act of 1914, which provided funds for vocational training, including home economics. Federal Household Arts Training Schools, begun in 1916, were intended to professionalize domestic service and especially to teach the use of new electric appliances. The assumption was that most beneficiaries would be African-American women—and, indirectly, the white women who employed them. The Department of Agriculture created its Bureau of Home Economics in 1923, and increasing numbers of colleges granted bachelors degrees in the subject.

The field did not decline as much as might have been expected during the Great Depression, and by the 1940s, women with home economics credentials were widely sought by food and fabric industries, as countless new products were designed and tested in response to the war. World War I had already played a part in promoting the field, when the military sought out dieticians in response to their discovery that a surprising number of men were malnourished. The same proved to be true in World War II, as many young soldiers did not have adequate diets in their Depression youth.

Nutrition, in fact, was one of Eleanor Roosevelt's pet topics, and she very much promoted the need for more than the beans-and-coffee diet that had been acceptable for most of military history. The War Department heard the message by 1943, and dieticians were, in fact, the first women recruited who did not have to go through the basic training and regimentation of the other women's corps. Under the aegis of the Surgeon General, the military accepted as many trained dietician as it could find and would have taken more had they been available. Ultimately, some sixteen hundred served, many overseas. In addition to general menu planning and kitchen supervision, they worked to find scarce fresh foods and developed the best-possible individual diets for sick and wounded soldiers. These were things highly beneficial to troops that never before had been done.

Back in the states, home economists were busy teaching the intricacies of the wartime rationing system and showing women how to provide adequate food and clothing for their families within its constraints. The war also caused tremendous changes in food production and preservation methods, and home economists found employment opportunities in, for example, laboratories that developed such things as dried milk and instant mashed potatoes. Food corporations wanted home economists to test and publicize recipes that featured non-rationed foods and to introduce the many new products that substituted for the familiar. The use of margarine (more commonly called oleo then) instead of butter is one major example.

The textile industry also assumed major wartime importance, as dozens of uniforms were created for use by people in dozens of military corps and volunteer organizations. Nylon and rayon replaced silk that could no longer be imported, and again home economics taught the necessary new sewing and laundry techniques. They worked with defense industries on

the design and manufacture of safe clothing, as, for example, fire-retarding garments for the many new women who worked in the munitions industry.

Other home economists helped develop child-care nurseries in defense plants and shipyards, sometimes creating menus and take-home food in an era when fast-food places did not yet exist. They counseled parents on war's effect on children, offered advice to young people on marriage during wartime, and otherwise worked to preserve the home as a place of stability in a violent world.

Because many home economists were employed by the Department of Agriculture, they especially worked with farm women. Again, food conservation was very important, and they taught techniques of getting the greatest possible produce from one's garden, dairy, and hen house. Safe home canning of garden produce still was somewhat problematic, and many home demonstration agents spent their summers in community canneries, where they helped women—some of whom did not have indoor plumbing—sterilize and seal their jars so that the food would not spoil. Non-farm women also were encouraged to grow Victory Gardens and again, home economists helped them with both the cultivation of the plants and the preservation of the produce.

Another wartime factor affecting the field was that until the 1940s, almost every family with upper-middle class aspirations employed at least one servant. When these cooks and maids and laundresses finally had a chance for better jobs in defense industries, some housewives were faced for their first time in their lives with cooking, cleaning, laundering, and more. They did not have the necessary skills and leaned on home economists for advice. The era's magazines were full of information to help such households cope with wartime changes.

Any credentialed home economist who wanted a job could find one during World War II, but they nonetheless were underutilized in other ways. None held a high-ranking position in the agencies that crafted the rationing system, for example, and perhaps as a result, the special nutritional needs of pregnant women and small families were ignored. Yet, in the variety of their work—as well as the skill-set required prior to freezers, microwaves, and more—the nation's home economists made a significant contribution to winning the war. Even more important, they helped create a higher status for progressive women in families that were far less patriarchal than in the past. Fascist nations, which offered only lip service to women and domesticity, suffered in comparison to the strong, knowledgeable women at the heart of American homes.

*See also:* **child care; children; conservation; defense industries; dieticians; domestic workers; food shortages; magazines, marriage; rationing; Victory Gardens**

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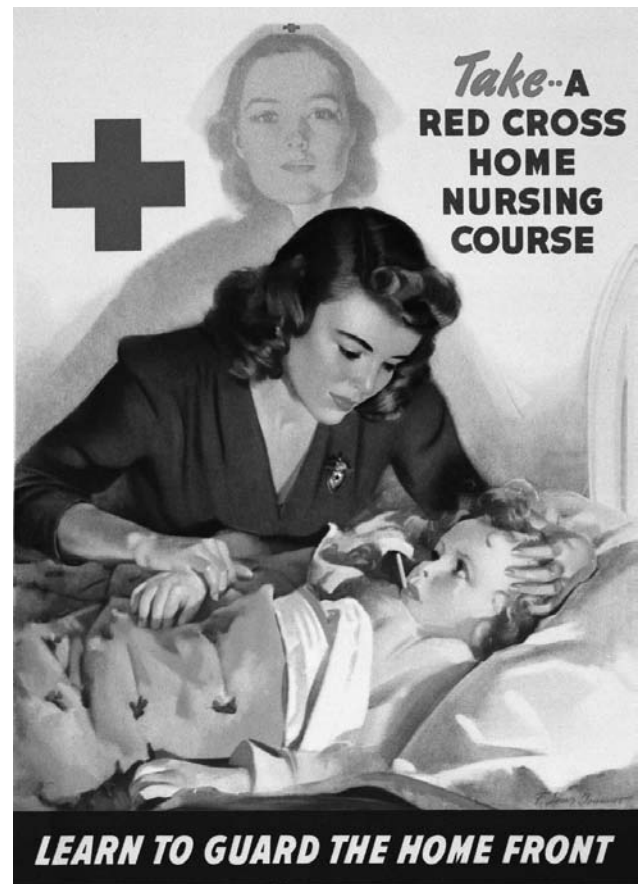
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## HOME NURSING

Hospitals were jammed to capacity during World War II, both because of increased needs and especially because medical staff was in short supply. Tens of thousands of (male) doctors were drafted, while an even larger number of (female) nurses volunteered for the Army Nurse Corps (ANC), Navy Nurse Corps (NNC), or the Red Cross. As they left the country for overseas battlefields, hospitals at home were desperately short of staff. Therefore, the media, the government, and volunteer organizations worked together to keep as many people as possible out of hospitals.

Home nursing had been the way that most nursing, in fact, had been done until just a few decades earlier. Until the era of World War I, hospitals were seen as more nearly asylums—places where only the indigent who had no one to care for them would go, places where callous medical students were likely to mistreat patients. Wealthy people never would consider sending a family member to a hospital: instead, they hired private-duty nurses and doctors who paid daily calls.

Organized medicine had done a great deal to overcome fears and to explicate the efficiency of hospital usage dur-



Because hospitals were crowded during the war, women were encouraged to nurse sick family members at home. *Courtesy of American Red Cross*

ing the early twentieth century, and even before the United States entered World War II, there was a shortage of nurses. Programs instituted by President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal increased health access in the 1930s, and already in 1941, before Pearl Harbor, some hospitals closed wings because they had no nurses to staff them. Doctors urged experienced mothers to have their babies at home, not in the hospital, and advised other patients too that they might well get better attention at home than in an overcrowded, understaffed hospital.

The Red Cross developed programs to train women in home nursing, and the public responded well. Even while the nation still was officially at peace in 1941, there was a 40 percent increase in certificates awarded for attendance at classes in home nursing. Women—and the assumption virtually always was that nurses were axiomatically women—were taught to take temperatures, change bandages, administer prescribed medications, bathe and feed patients, and basically do all of the tasks performed by a licensed practical nurse (LPN).

Usually taught by a registered nurse (RN) who was a graduate of a nursing school, these classes met in church basements or the back rooms of libraries. In such a setting, women poured over anatomy books and learned to recognize

signs of illnesses. They studied charts on the way to make a bed with least disruption to the patient and how to prepare custard and other nutritious, easily digestible food. They practiced tying tourniquets to stop bleeding; they learned to change dressings on burn victims without tearing emerging skin; they memorized the warning signs of a worsening condition that meant they should call the doctor.

Later in the war, the subject of home nursing arose again in a different context: the care of returned soldiers. That was far more difficult, as some men came back wounded in soul as well as body. Some veterans could not eat or could not digest what they ate, while their wives or mothers vainly tried to use what they had learned in home nursing classes about the importance of good nutrition. Other men had nightmares that no amount of hospital standard bed-making would ease. A disfigured man especially, some magazines warned, would not want visitors and might well resent even the loved one who nursed him. Women were expected to have the wisdom of Solomon and the patience of Job, as Betsey Barron, writing in *McCall's*, instructed:

Be gentle with the wounded man you love ... but not too gentle. Demand of him all that he has the strength to do and to give. Start him in on little things ... until he is used to his new self ... Only those with the vision of love can force him to help himself when it would have been easier to help him.

*McCall's* advice was exceptional, as most postwar media simply avoided this difficult subject. Nor did women get much help from the medical establishment: instead, as another *McCall's* article said, "there is neither time nor personnel available to give each man the ... help he needs." Physical therapy, speech therapy, and so forth also were only beginning to emerge as fields for specialized care, and the home nursing curriculum that women learned was far from adequate to deal with such complex problems. Still, the training in first aid, nutrition, and nursing fundamentals provided by home nursing courses gave many women valuable information and skills that benefited them and their families for the rest of their lives.

At the same time, however, as soon as organized medicine recovered from the crisis of the 1940s, home nursing was again discouraged. Almost nothing was publishing on the subject in the 1950s and 1960s, and when it was rediscovered in the 1970s, the term was "home health care." It grew when large numbers of the first recipients of Medicare became eligible for hospitalization and nursing homes, and a movement again arose to keep patients in their homes.

**See also:** Army Nurse Corps; dieticians; food shortages; home economics; hospitals; magazines; Navy Nurse Corps; nurses; Red Cross; veterans

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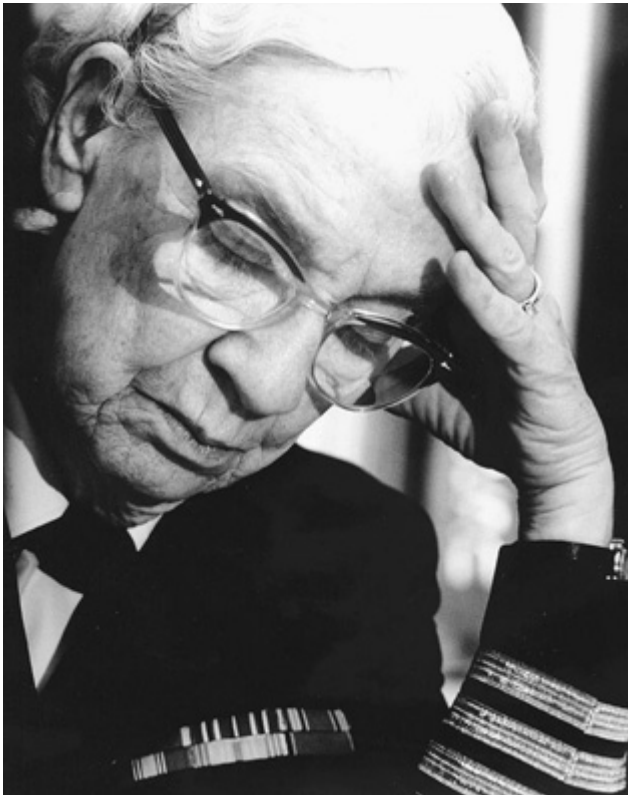
## HOPPER, GRACE BREWSTER MURRAY (1907–1992)

"Amazing Grace" Hopper was the nation's oldest officer on active duty when she finally retired from the U.S. Navy at age seventy-nine. For years, the Pentagon had recognized her exceptional value by granting her annual exemptions to the usual mandatory retirement age of sixty-two. Her superiors there understood that more than anyone else, Admiral Hopper was the mother of computer systems that now are essential to American life.

Born in New York City, Grace Murray's middle name of "Brewster" indicated a family that dated back to the *Mayflower*. Clearly gifted in mathematics even as a child, she graduated in 1928 from Vassar, New York's famed college for women, with a degree in mathematics. She began teaching there while also working on degrees from Yale University—which by then, admitted women to most graduate departments, although not as undergraduates. Her 1930 marriage to Vincent Foster Hopper, an English professor at New York University, did not deter her from continued study, and she earned her Yale doctorate in 1934.

Dr. Hopper thus was teaching mathematics at Vassar when World War II began. Like many other childless wives, she joined the military when her husband did, enlisting in the Navy's WAVES in 1943. Because of her excellent credentials, she entered as a lieutenant junior grade, or "Lt. JG," in the Navy's lingo, a higher rank than that of most WAVES. She nonetheless trained at Massachusetts' Smith College, where the WAVES conducted classes for officers, but then continued to work in an academic milieu in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

She was assigned, along with many other WAVES, to the Navy's Bureau of Ordnance. Among the things that WAVES did was to calculate ranges of weapons and figure the trajectories of guns, especially for ship-to-shore targets.



Grace Hopper, shown here in 1976, pioneered computer science as a member of the Navy's WAVES. Note her wedding ring; she was a war widow. *U.S. Navy Photo, Navel Historical Center*

Hopper was among the women who dealt with this aspect of planning the 1944 D-Day invasion of occupied Europe, but because of her keen intelligence and ability to deal with theoretical physics and math, she almost immediately moved beyond the work of her colleagues into artificial intelligence. Hopper still was a WAVE, though, when she programmed the nation's first large-scale digital computer in a basement at Harvard University.

After her husband was killed in the last year of the war, she dedicated the rest of her life to computerization and to the U.S. Navy. As the electronic processing of information became more and more a part of military operations and was highly subsidized by the government, she was employed by several military-industrial contractors, most notably the Sperry Corporation, and became the author of many programs, including the important pioneer computer language, COBAL. As a Naval Reserve Officer, she continued to work closely with the Navy in the years between the war's demobilization and her 1967 recall to active duty. Soon called "Amazing Grace," and later, "The Grand Old Lady of Software," Hopper coined a number of terms that are commonly used today, including "bug in the system."

After 1967, when the Navy took the highly unusual step of recalling a sixty-year-old officer, Commander Hopper held the title of Director, Navy Programming Languages Group. She was promoted to captain in 1973, commodore in 1983,

and rear admiral in 1985. This male-dominated world understood how unique was the mind of this tiny, white-haired woman, and in 1969, the new Data Processing Management Association gave her its inaugural (and misnamed) Computer Science Man-of-the-Year Award. Masculine nomenclature continued in 1973, when the British Computer Society made Hopper the first American and the first woman of any nationality to be named a Distinguished Fellow.

She also had a reputation for candor, even when dealing with superior military officers. "She's challenged at every turn the dictates of mindless bureaucracy," Navy Secretary John Lehman said at her retirement. Hopper added, "I always tell young people, 'go ahead and do it. You can apologize later.'" She was known for witty and sagacious observations such as: "life was simple before World War II; after that, we had systems" and "the most damaging phrase in the language is, 'It's always been done that way'."

Despite her independent attitudes, the military rewarded her with regular promotions in rank—especially compared to the long-suffering women in the Navy Nurse Corps (NNC). Although NNC leaders had global responsibilities for tens of thousands of lives in World War II, none was promoted to admiral until 1972, when Alene Duerk became the first. Duerk's career had begun with service on the *USS Benevolence* in the dangerous waters of the Pacific Theater of Operations, and her promotion probably was prompted by the era's women's movement, not because of naval initiative. Hopper, however, in her computer world, did not suffer similar discrimination, and respect for her abilities increased as she aged.

When she retired in 1986, Admiral Grace Hopper had served the Navy forty-three years—more than twice as long as the era's standard military career. Her retirement ceremony honored her as the nation's oldest military officer with ceremonies on the nation's oldest ship, the *USS Constitution*, or "Old Ironsides," in Boston harbor. She also was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal, the highest possible decoration, and when she died at eighty-five, was honored with burial in Arlington National Cemetery.

She also is remembered at the Grace Hopper Celebration of Women in Computing, which has been holding annual conferences for more than a decade.

**See also:** D-Day; cryptography; electronics industry; keypunch machines; Navy Nurse Corps; Pacific Theater of Operations; WAVES; widows

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## HOSPITALS

Both civilian and military hospitals were much affected by World War II. Perhaps their greatest crisis centered on women, when hospital officials discovered that the nation did not have nearly enough nurses. Hospital procedures, too, changed significantly because of the war, with much of that change involving women.

Until about World War I, most families avoided using hospitals for their loved ones if that was at all possible. People who could afford it hired nurses and doctors to come to their homes, and most saw hospitals as asylums, a last resort for the indigent. Especially the immigrant poor believed that callous medical students practiced on helpless patients; indeed, a common Italian curse translated as “may you end your days in a hospital.”

The perception of hospitals became more positive in the 1920s, as home nursing clearly had failed to stand up to the worldwide influenza epidemic that killed millions of people following World War I. The growing profession of social workers, the American Nurses Association, and other progressive women pushed for more and better hospitals in the 1920s, and especially after President Franklin Roosevelt’s 1932 election, a number of public health programs were introduced that made people more comfortable with the idea of hospitalization. Then came the crisis of World War II, when there was no room for would-be patients.

Already by 1941, some hospitals closed wards or even wings because they had no nurses to staff them. This was a result of failure to invest in nursing education during the Great Depression, and although Congress tried to catch up with the Bolton Bill, the Cadet Nurse Corps, and other mechanisms, the shortage of nurses persisted throughout the war, greatly affecting both civilian and military hospitals.

In addition to the shortage of hospital personnel, all construction priority went to the military during the war: building materials soon became unavailable, as fundamentals such as steel went instead to ships and planes. The nation’s population also shifted drastically towards its coasts, and as cities such as Los Angeles and Washington became extremely crowded, so did their hospitals. Because nothing new could be built—and because nurses weren’t available in any case—patients were strongly urged to stay out of hospitals if at all possible. Women went back to home nursing for their sick and elderly, and doctors advised expectant mothers to deliver their babies at home.

Although the military had priority for building materials, Army Nurse Corps (ANC) official Edith Aynes said that it was not unusual for male egos to get in the way of efficiency.

Quoting records from the Office of Surgeon General, she reported:

Hoping to speed construction, The Quartermaster General proposed standardization and decentralization—the use of standard buildings for hospitals ranging in size from 25 to 2,000 beds—approved initially by the Surgeon General’s Office and subject to no further changes by it. ... Nevertheless, because of The Surgeon General’s insistence, both the Quartermaster Corps and the Corps of Engineers followed the practice of referring hospital building schedules and layouts to his Office for approval ... These offices hurled charges and countercharges against each other ...

Similar turf wars existed between the new women’s corps and the older nursing corps—even though both the Army Nurse Corps (ANC) and the Women’s Army Corps (WAC) resisted the use of WACs as hospital workers. The need was so great, however, that WACs sometimes were assigned to hospitals, especially as medical technicians, and the two simply had to learn to work together under the constraints of their various bosses. To the average military woman, however, these lines of authority meant little. Instead, the commendable fact is that many WACs, especially overseas, volunteered in hospitals when they were off-duty from their assigned jobs. These young women were especially adept at doing the little things that matter to soldiers and that overburdened nurses did not have time to do. They wrote letters home for men who could not write, held cigarettes for those with missing hands, read to those whose eyes were covered with bandages.

Bureaucratic competition eased as the war worsened, but hospital construction never caught up with the need. Even within the United States, many women worked in make-shift locales. In Florida, for example, hotels that had to close because tourists could not get rationed tires and gasoline, became hospitals for the duration, especially for ambulatory convalescents. Although not necessarily the most efficient arrangements for nursing, women who worked in such places often enjoyed a much more pleasant experience than nurses in the most modern of urban hospitals. From the famed Greerbrier resort in the West Virginia mountains to the California shores, some women worked in hospitals with a vacation atmosphere just beyond the door. “Duty” even could include helping a wounded man walk on the beach.

Overseas, tens of thousands of women worked in other temporary hospitals: in England, an operating room might be the former dining room of a old manor house; recovery wards could be the dormitories of a boarding school closed for the duration. Because the Allies had little military presence in North Africa, where the first organized battles against the Germans occurred, hospitals in Morocco or Algeria were especially likely to be in places constructed for another purpose or in tents. The same conditions continued after D-Day, as nurses directed male medics in setting up tent hospitals that they expected to soon take down and move as the battle lines moved throughout the European Theater of Operation (ETO).

Prior to any of these fronts, of course, nurses worked in

open jungles, their patients in hammocks or even the bare ground of Bataan and Corregidor. Primitive conditions, in fact, would be more common than not throughout the Pacific Theater. Keeping things sterile and maintaining a sufficient stock of medication and other supplies was very difficult under these circumstances, but nurses continued to set high standards for themselves. They used the proper nomenclature, for example, referring to “the surgical ward,” “the orthopedic ward,” and so forth—even if these areas of their camp lacked walls or roofs.

Once a seriously sick or wounded soldier was stabilized, his “hospital bed” often was a bunk on a ship headed state-side: many men returned to the United States or its Pacific territories, recovered in military hospitals, and were sent back to battle—sometimes without even a visit from families who were too far to travel to the predominately coastal hospitals. Hospital ships were run by the Navy Nurse Corps (NNC), women who supervised male medics who did the menial work of caring for many hundreds, sometimes thousands of patients, crowded onto one ship. Alene Duerk, later the Navy’s first female admiral, is just one example of the women who worked on these floating hospitals.

“Flying hospitals” were one of the war’s biggest innovations, especially in the isolated China-Burma-India front (CBI). Roads never had been built in much of this mountainous terrain, and it was extremely difficult either to build hospitals, or, in a time prior to helicopters, to get the wounded out quickly enough to save them. Specially trained flight nurses took charge of patients on long and dangerous flights over mountains and then the ocean, treating men in critical conditions for days without a doctor’s advice. In an astounding record, these usually-young women handled some thirty-seven thousand men and lost just one.

They frequently had to administer oxygen on high-altitude flights in planes that were not yet well-pressurized—and most of their patients were unfamiliar with flying, let alone with oxygen tanks. Oxygen was just one of many hospital innovations that evolved along with the war. ANC official Edith Aynes, for example, was proud of implementing the concept of central supply, something that now is routine for sterilization assurance as well as for efficient use of goods that often were scarce during the war.

The war also increased recognition of professions that were just beginning to emerge, but which later would prove fundamental to both hospital administration and to female employment. Dieticians, physical therapists, laboratory and x-ray technicians may be the best examples of such during the war. The need for speech therapists, occupational therapists, mental-health counselors, and more was only just beginning to emerge, and the war would be the catalyst for those occupations and more.

Beyond such systematization, the era also saw the introduction of important new medicines and techniques. Blood banks alone were a major life-saver. Most were run by volunteer women associated with the Red Cross, but they often worked in conjunction with civilian hospitals for drawing and storing

donated blood prior to shipment to other hospitals closer to the battle fronts. Blood banks became so well organized that already in the spring of 1942, some five thousand pints of blood were collected weekly. Other important innovations included the widespread use of intravenous feeding (IV) and pioneering antibiotics, especially the miracle of penicillin. Author Diane Burke Fessler quoted several nurses on the subject of penicillin, which then could not be given orally, but instead called for a hypodermic needle. In Hawaii, ANC member Hazel Johnson Barton said she worked on

a neurosurgical ward, where many of the patients had been picked up from the beaches during the first wave of island offensives in the Pacific. There were many spinal cord injuries as well as head wounds. I remember one patient ... who had a head wound with exposed brain tissue. Penicillin was just being introduced and the patient improved enough to be transferred to the mainland.

Another ANC nurse in the South Pacific, Dorothy Wood, accurately said, “I don’t think penicillin was in use in the States yet when we had it.” She resented using the wonder drug for men with syphilis, but dutifully administered “a shot every four hours. These guys would just turn over, butt up, barely waking up.” Penicillin indeed was so new that NNC member Margaret Nash had never heard of it in 1945, when she and other women—and two newborn babies—were rescued from Los Banos, a prisoner-of-war camp where they had lived since the Philippines fell early in 1942.

Other nurses commented on the use of IVs, something that again was unfamiliar to many patients—and which Japanese prisoners often refused to accept. Doctors traditionally inserted IVs, but as with other procedures, nurses soon learned the task. Viola Molley, an army nurse in the ETO’s horrific Battle of the Bulge, said that “the casualties came in so fast, nurses had to start blood transfusions, which only doctors had done before.” Virginia Grabowski, who was on the southern end of that battle and was bombed on Christmas Eve of 1944, added: “We had to learn to do a lot of things right on the spot. I did blood transfusions, intravenous medications, and even sewed up secondary closure wounds.”

On the other side of the world in the Pacific Theater of Operations, the ANC’s Julia Polchiopek said that she “learned to administer intravenous anesthesia” after “five minutes of instruction” from a busy physician. Anesthesia, she remembered, “was scary. I stopped breathing with every [patient], then took a deep breath when they did.” Finally, Fessler quoted a CBI flight nurse, Frances Thorp, who said that “the most horrible and unforgettable experience I ever went through” was a fiery plane crash on the Yangtze River. After long hours of surgery on badly burned men, she reported: “one of the doctors couldn’t get an IV started, and I realized he was drunk, so I pushed him aside and started it myself.”

Although these nurses quickly learned procedures that only doctors had done in the past, the future soon would return to that past. As the war’s convalescents recovered in the late 1940s, hospitals began to revert to the old world of physician privilege—and almost all of those physicians would be male.

The same doctor who told his pregnant patients to stay home in 1943 would tell them in 1948 that they had to go to the hospital—and be subjected to general anesthesia and plan to stay at least a week. Not until the women's movement of the 1970s would these things again begin to turn around—and nurse-anesthetists would be viewed as a new phenomenon when they were re-invented in the late twentieth century.

**See also:** American Nurses Association; Army Nurse Corps; Bataan; Bolton, Frances; Cadet Nurse Corps; cigarettes; Corregidor; D-Day; dieticians; European Theater of Operations; flight nurses; home nursing; letter writing; Navy Nurse Corps; North Africa; nurses; Pacific Theater of Operations; physicians; pregnancy; prisoners of war; Quartermaster Corps; rationing; Red Cross; travel; Women's Army Corps

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## HOUSEWORK

To understand the reality of women's lives during World War II, it is vital to recognize that the nature of housework was much different from today. Personnel managers who recruited women for defense jobs—with their routine six-day weeks and no vacation or leave time—rarely comprehended the hard labor that most women also undertook in their second jobs at home.

Just laundry, for example, was a full-day task in an era

before permanent-press fabrics and automatic washers and dryers. First a woman had to fill the washing-machine tub with hot water—which in many rural areas, she still had to draw from a well and heat over a stove. The recommended first load was the white shirts that men wore on Sundays, washed while the water was at its cleanest and hottest; subsequent loads had to be sorted by color and amount of soiling to make maximum use of the same water—or a woman had to go through the difficulty of draining and refilling. After the machine agitated the clothes, the housekeeper then put each individual garment through a wringer to get out most of the suds; next, each piece went into a rinse tub, followed by a second rinse tub—so that she handled each item through three wringer steps. Clothes that had to be ironed also were dropped into a starch bath—with starch that first had to be cooked and cooled—and again wrung.

Then the heavy, wet clothes were carried outside—often up basement stairs—and hung with clothes pins on wire lines. After they dried, the housekeeper had to take them down, carry them back in, and then sprinkle the items to be ironed with just the right amount of water to make them malleable for the iron—which, if she lacked electricity, had to be heated on the stove. The drying stage, of course, was highly dependent on the weather, and often a woman had no choice but to spread laundry throughout her home while waiting for it to dry. In winter, it was not unusual to deal with garments or linens that were frozen to rigidity.

A housewife might well have to stop in the middle of this process to cook, as both school children and husbands often came home for their noon meal. That cooking usually was from scratch, with, for examples, carrots that had to be peeled or cakes that were baked without a mix. She used a stove, not a microwave, and sometimes that stove was fueled by wood that had to be carried in and its ashes carried out. Many homes still did not have refrigerators, and those housewives depended on refrigerator-style appliances that actually were cooled by big blocks of ice. A woman was expected to be home when the iceman made his rounds, and, of course, the icebox's drip pan also had to be emptied regularly.

Those refrigerators that did exist were small, and they never included freezers as modern people understand freezers: they featured a freezing space just big enough for a tray of ice cubes and perhaps a pint of ice cream. In some towns, the local butcher offered meat lockers where one could keep frozen items, but this, of course, meant running to town for each package of pork chops or hamburger. Dairies delivered milk, and some offered butter, cheese, or (less often) eggs, but again, the woman had to be home when these perishables arrived—and such service was not available in all areas, especially after wartime rationing of gasoline and tires meant that dairies preferred mass deliveries to stores.

Walking to the store thus became another near-daily chore—and grocery bags had to be carried home in one's arms or perhaps balanced precariously on the baby's pram. Stores typically closed at 6:00 p.m., eliminating the possibility of





Although this kitchen seems small, it set the standard of modern style in the 1940s. Families usually were large, something that can be seen by the additional table for children. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

shopping help from most husbands, and virtually all closed on Sundays—the only day that most women in defense plants had off from work. Supermarkets, too, were still in the future in many locales, which meant that the shopper had to make separate stops at a bakery, meat market, drugstore, dry-goods store, and more.

Once her food was purchased, cooked, and served, a housewife faced a stack of dirty dishes. Dishwashers were far into the future, and husbands almost never helped. The procedure required dishes to be scraped, pre-rinsed, washed, rinsed, dried, and put away—and the usual expectation was that this would be done at least three times a day, following breakfast, lunch, and supper. Again, many women had to heat their dishwater on the stove. The same was true at bath time, when water often had to be carried from the kitchen stove to the bath tub for sparing use by dirty children. Nor, of course, was there any air conditioning to make life comfortable in summer; in winter, coal-fueled furnaces often “choked” and filled homes with soot, destroying the results of a hard day of cleaning or laundry.

Rural and small-town women routinely grew big gardens and canned the produce; during the war, even urban women were encouraged to develop a Victory Garden. Then, too, prior to birth control, it often was a pregnant woman doing these labor-intensive chores—and she had to stop to nurse infants or hand-feed babies or change diapers and otherwise tend to the non-stop needs of a half-dozen children. It is little wonder that aspiring middle-class homes usually employed a domestic worker or two—but unless she was a live-in, often that woman had to go home to her own double-duty job. Moreover, because many domestic servants found better jobs in wartime defense plants, countless older women had to resume doing their housework.

Young housekeepers rarely could expect to find any hired

help, and they also had to deal with the extreme scarcity of housing during the war. They lived in tiny trailers—smaller than most modern travel trailers—or in one-room apartments with “kitchen privileges.” In such surroundings, they had to cope with washing diapers, sterilizing baby bottles, and other child-care difficulties. A radio likely would be the only form of entertainment for millions of young mothers who waited in such circumstances for their babies’ fathers to return from the war.

Already a strenuous, isolated, and under-appreciated job, the war made housework more difficult in other ways. Rationing was the main loci: because the nation was short of almost everything, countless adjustments had to be made for conservation of common household items that could not be replaced, and substitutions called for constant experimentation and creativity, especially in cooking. Then, too, it almost always was the housewife’s responsibility to stand in line to get her family’s ration book in the first place, as well as figuring out the complexities of making the most efficient use of ration stamps in her marketing.

Housework also expanded exponentially because of the war, as women sewed and hung black-out curtains and carried out other commands of the Office of Civil Defense. Government agencies, advertisers, and especially magazines endlessly nagged women to polish the metal parts of everything in their homes, to keep their children’s shoes and clothes free of dirt so that they would last longer, to adopt special laundry techniques for bed linens that could not be replaced, and even to dust light bulbs for the tiny amount of energy that somehow might save. Nor were men of that era psychologically equipped to accept much responsibility for keeping their households running. As Edith Stern spelled out, when she answered those who criticized housewives for not taking factory jobs:

## HOUSEWORK

Home-making minutiae are distracting and energy-draining. When household equipment needs replacement, when the children's shoe size changes, when the toothpaste runs out, it is Mother and not Father who ... squeezes in the necessary ... time somewhere ... If a woman can learn to run a drill press, why can't a man learn to run a washing machine?

All of this makes it highly understandable that when Elizabeth Meyer tried to interview "mothers of young children" about their new jobs in defense plants, they "seemed too exhausted to talk about their work. If they did talk to me, I hadn't the heart to take much of their time or energy ... [Their] exhaustion was heartbreaking to see." Sickness was too often the result—and absenteeism from work, which too many thoughtlessly condemned as "slacking off" and "aiding Hitler." One of the few magazines that seemed to truly understand reality was *Independent Woman*, a publication aimed at women who always had worked outside the home. Its editors summarized women's double-duty days well by saying, "because a woman is unemployed does not mean that she is unoccupied."

**See also: absenteeism; advertising; birth control; children; Civil Defense; conservation; defense industries; domestic workers; food; housing; magazines; pregnancy; rationing; recruitment; wives of servicemen; Victory Gardens**

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## HOUSING

Few problems were as pervasive and incapable of solution as was the shortage of housing during World War II. Millions of people moved as a result of the war, seriously overcrowding the available stock of residences in vital centers for military training and defense production. From the aircraft factories of Los Angeles to the shipyards of Baltimore, and from the Texas army camps where soldiers drilled to the Great Lakes where sailors trained, countless Americans vainly sought shelter.

The housing crisis affected women much more than men: the military would build a bunk for its draftee, but few construction materials were allotted to civilian use—despite the fact that the population shifted hugely towards new boom towns around military posts and defense industries. About one in every four Americans moved at least once during the war years; many moved several times. All of the fifteen million who went into the military traveled away from their homes, of course, and another ten million civilians moved to take war jobs.

They left cities such as Boston, Memphis, Omaha, and St. Paul to converge on defense production centers, primarily on the coasts. Although their destination might be an urbanized region such as Newark/Wilmington or Seattle/Portland, they might be also be highly specific places of labor needs in the interior, such the iron mines around Ravenna/Warren, Ohio, or the munitions plants in Childersburg, Alabama, and Aberdeen, Mississippi.

When everything available in such places had been rented, new arrivals found themselves homeless. For different reasons, but with the same effect, some reverted to Great Depression habitats, sleeping in tents, rusting railroad cars, and abandoned buildings. Those lucky enough to find an apartment or a room in a boarding house sometimes slept double in single beds, with night workers sharing the same beds by day. They were earning good money, but simply lacked rental options because housing construction materials were instead going into ships and planes.

Women with families, of course, had even greater difficul-

ty. They moved into attics, basements, garages, or whatever space some landlady offered. One longtime housewife, whose husband and son were shipbuilders, joined them at work and told writer Virginia Wilkinson, "I refused point-blank to stay home and keep house in a garage." The housing shortage turned into a positive career change for her, but that seldom was the case. Most home-seekers instead were young women, often with young children, akin to the two women who, after "weeks of pavement pounding," moved into an attic near their husbands at Great Lakes Naval Station. According to *American Home*, it was "everything they had dreamed of within their Navy wives' budget. A steep staircase leads to" a small kitchen, bath, and two bedrooms.

Nor were blue-collar workers or camp-following military wives the only ones who suffered cramped conditions: perhaps the worst crowding was experienced by the thousands of pink-collar women who flocked to Washington, D.C., as "government girls." Usually young and unmarried, they roomed with strangers and did their cooking on an electric heating element called a "hot plate." Even hotel rooms were booked far in advance, and many travelers ended up sleeping in their lobbies. *Independent Woman* advised readers who might be thinking about taking a job in Washington:

No girl should be insane enough to go to the city first and expect to get a job afterwards. She can probably get the job all right, but until she does, she is likely to be out on a long limb in the cold so far as sleeping and eating are concerned.

Eventually government agencies were forced to build dormitories for these female employees, especially around the new Pentagon on the Virginia side of the Potomac River in what then was called "Arlington Farms." President Franklin D. Roosevelt personally interested himself in this housing design, and according to *Architectural Record*, plans called for "31 residence halls with 12,291 rooms ... within walking distance of likely places of employment." Quickly and cheaply constructed, they looked shabby at the outset, yet they served the need—and many of these buildings continued to be used by government agencies for decades.

The same was true at isolated munitions plants, which were deliberately built in rural areas where an accidental explosion would do the least harm. The same July 1942 issue of *Architectural Record* spoke to the residential needs of the many women who spent their days assembling explosives. Blueprints showed rows of bed and bath rooms, as well as a porch, lobby, telephone, and space for "a pantry in case of occupancy by women; storage in case of occupancy by men." Editorial logic was less curious, however, on the main point:

In the face of shortages of materials, obvious advantages derive from concentrating plumbing facilities for the use of many ... And since this shelter is urgently needed and in many cases only for the duration, it seems the height of folly ... to build an entire house.

Although young women might find an institutionally-gray



Poster alerting defense workers to the availability of houses, apartments, and rooms through the Philadelphia Homes Registration Offices, showing a man dressed as a Quaker.

*Courtesy of Library of Congress*

dorm room to be acceptably similar to the fun of a college campus, there continued to be great difficulties for married women with children, especially around Washington. The shortage of metal for plumbing grew so bad in Arlington, in fact, that some families lived for months without sewage connections—before they were evicted because their housing was a public health hazard. High-ranking military men said privately that they were more concerned about losing their families to disease about losing their own lives in battle.

Many families of professional military men traditionally had waited out their man's overseas duty living in or near Washington or cities that were relevant to a husband's home naval or army base. Women wanted to be in locales where, if their man happened to return to port or was ordered back to the War Department, they would be conveniently nearby. When these cities were flooded with newcomers, however, no space remained. According to *Time*, after a fruitless search for housing in New Orleans, one disgusted woman ran this newspaper ad:

WANTED BY A NAVAL OFFICER'S WIFE—whose husband is serving overseas—and THREE MONSTERS in the form of my little children—TO RENT a 2 or 3 bedroom house, apartment, BARN or CAGE or whatever is supposed to serve as shelter when such terrible creatures as children have to be considered ...



In such desperate circumstances, property owners initially could and did charge unconscionable prices, with rents rising 100 percent or more in the first year of the war. In a little Missouri town near a major army post, for example, a camp-following wife found that one room—without closet or dresser and containing only a bed and one straight chair—cost considerably more than what she had paid for a pleasant apartment on the East Coast. The Office of Price Control (OPA), which had intervened in the Washington, D.C., area by ruling that rent could be no more than 20 percent of a government worker's income, largely gave up on establishing such ceilings near isolated army towns. They discovered that owners simply asked for bribes, forcing servicemen's wives into breaking the law.

Whatever OPA did hardly mattered in any case because there simply was nothing more available—especially after advertising campaigns urged even women who never would have thought of becoming landladies to do so. In posters and in both print and radio ads, the message was that one had a patriotic duty to “share your space.” Because many domestic servants found better jobs in war industries, servants' quarters were the first likely space that an affluent woman would rent, followed by her basement and guest bedrooms. Construction materials for necessary renovations could be obtained for this purpose, and in places such as Tampa—where both shipyards and three air bases brought thousands of newcomers—many stately old homes still have exterior staircases that were built for attic apartments during World War II.

Literally millions of people moved to the West Coast during the war, and after every available room was rented, people lived in trailers and even tents. Shipbuilder Henry J. Kaiser responded by building a whole new town: Vanport City, Oregon, on the border of Washington and Oregon, spread out over six hundred acres and provided not only housing, but also other services of tremendous value to working women. Susan B. Anthony II, niece of the great feminist, reported that forty thousand Kaiser employees lived there and approvingly added that “wives are not admitted to the ten thousand war apartments unless they too are making ships or working in other war production.” More than that, though, were other thoughtful innovations:

Working wives, instead of coming home from the day, swing, or graveyard shifts to start another eight hour job of marketing, cooking, and washing, eat at the cafeteria operated for them and their husbands, and for single workers. Nor are wives expected to stay away from the job to care for ailing husbands; nor are husbands asked to care for ailing wives ... When they are ill they simply go to the 200-bed infirmary until they are well.

Few other businessmen were as creative as Kaiser, however, and African Americans suffered most from the housing shortage. The dangerous munitions industry hired a disproportionately large number of black women, and in Elkton, Maryland, a major munitions locale, labor expert Mary Vorse said of the longtime residents:

Their houses are small, their families are large. There was no place to put the more than doubled colored population which flowed into town. Colored workers sat up all night in kitchens and sitting rooms, since their hosts had no beds for them; girls ... slept cramped in their cars. Their pastor ... is the only one to look out for their interests, and he meets almost as many emergencies as there are days. Over Thanksgiving he housed fifteen stranded people ... migratory workers from Florida who had just finished digging potatoes in New Jersey.

Ultimately the housing crisis for African Americans became so severe that the Federal Housing Administration (FHA) built some of the same sort of dormitories for black women that other agencies had done for whites. They were fewer in number than those for whites, but this segregated housing nonetheless was more than either local government or private employers had been willing to do.

African-American women who followed their husbands to military camps, of course, endured all the problems of white women, plus many more. Housing remained highly segregated all over the nation, and advertising that encouraged families to rent unused space never intended to suggest that a white family should rent a to black one. In places such as the army's desert-training camps in the Southwest, where an indigenous black population was virtually nonexistent, the chances for housing would be similarly nonexistent. It actually improved, ironically enough, in the Deep South: at Georgia's Fort Benning, for example, a black woman could expect to find support from an established black community in nearby Columbus. The same was true of Fayetteville, North Carolina, and Biloxi, Mississippi, and similar army/navy towns throughout the South.

Housing for black women in the military also was segregated, but at least military women did not have to seek their own housing. They nevertheless suffered from the building-materials crunch, as more than male soldiers, they were apt to be assigned to non-traditional barracks. Recruits for the initial Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, for example, soon overflowed the barracks at Fort Des Moines, Iowa, and many were billeted in downtown hotel rooms, far from camp. Hotels and other vacant tourist space soon became the loci of the second WAAC training center in Daytona Beach, Florida. The Navy's WAVES never did use established naval facilities; instead, they trained from the beginning on college campuses.

Even middle-aged women in these corps and those of the Marines and the Coast Guard were expected to revert to dorm life, usually with little more than a bed and a footlocker as their “home.” In the long extant Navy Nurse Corps, traditional residences had been fairly pleasant “nurses homes” on naval bases, but many NNC women spent the war in tiny cabins on hospital ships. Army Nurse Corps women also lived in hospital-associated housing in the states, but when they went overseas, both they and other army women rarely had traditional housing: instead they lived in everything from converted castles to pup tents.

Occasionally, the reverse situation might be true, as a woman from a deprived section of the nation found even cramped new conditions better than what she had known before. For those who came from Appalachia to Baltimore shipyards, for example, a crowded bathroom that served many was much nicer than the outhouse she had known. Central heating, too, was new for millions of women whose families heated with coal or wood stoves, while others came from homes where they still drew their water from a well. Although the new residential halls usually had just one or two telephones in the lobby, that also was more phone access than many had at home.

They became accustomed to such modern accoutrements, and that was a factor in the fact that the housing crunch did not end when the war did. As millions of men came home, got married, and began families, the civilian building boom continued without end. Many young couples initially had less-than-desirable habitat, especially on or near college campuses that were flooded with returning veterans. Some lived in Quonset huts converted from military use and quickly set up in college quads. Even the most desirable “married-student housing” typically was one room, with a small bath and kitchenette and a combined study/living room/bedroom.

In an era prior to widespread birth control, often a baby or two was introduced into this abode, and the crowded conditions inevitably stressed the marriage—but the GI Bill that paid for the veteran’s tuition also offered home loans. It and the FHA would guarantee millions of mortgages, offering long-term support for enthusiastic homebuilding. Postwar America would see endless new tract housing and suburban subdivisions, as families—with women at their center—satisfied their pent-up wartime desire for bigger and better, for personal privacy and room to roam.

**See also:** African-American women; aircraft workers; Army Nurse Corps; birth control/birth rate; boom towns; camp followers; colleges; Daytona Beach WAC Training Center; Des Moines, Fort; defense industries; domestic workers; draft; GI Bill; “government girls”; housework; landladies; munitions; Navy Nurse Corps; Office of Price Control; shipbuilding; travel; veterans; WAVES; Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps

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## INFLATION

Economists define inflation as rapidly rising prices, usually due to increased demand for something that has become scarce. Many things became scarce during World War II, primarily for two reasons: the war interrupted normal shipping channels, and it diverted civilian materials to military use. Prices for everything therefore axiomatically rise—and because it takes more dollars to purchase anything, the value of one's money falls. Inflation therefore is hardest on those who are not employed, including housewives: they cannot expect a raise in wages to help them meet the rising prices. Retirees find that their savings not only drops in value, but also that they have to spend more of it for the ordinary costs of life.

Take just one small and simple example: cinnamon comes from Southeast Asia, and when the Japanese took over that area and bombed American ships on the Pacific, cinnamon no longer would be easily available. An astute grocer therefore would charge more for a can of it, knowing that it would be difficult for him to replace. Multiply cinnamon by many other items, including such food fundamentals as sugar and coffee, and then add other Asian products such as silk (essential for parachutes) and rubber (which was not yet synthetic), and an inflationary crisis soon becomes evident.

Nor was importation the only inflationary pressure. Much more serious was the diversion of countless production lines to military needs. Tens of thousands of planes and ships had to be built, as well as tanks and trucks and jeeps—all of which needed large amounts of steel. New production of metal civilian goods ceased, as both car factories and other plants retooled to make military items. This meant that a woman could not expect to buy a new stove or refrigera-

tor or even pots and pans: the company that had made her kitchen forks and knives now might make canteens and helmets for soldiers. Because everyone knew that all metal items would become scarce, naturally there would be some sellers who would instantly raise the prices for any such that they had in stock.

In the panic after Pearl Harbor, millions of Americans who were affluent enough to do so stripped their local stores bare of things that they remembered were scarce during World War I. Prices naturally zoomed for those items that remained. Soon after the declaration of war, *New Republic* reported that “the cost of living is racing up at two percent a month.” Like other progressive media, it concluded that “prices are being driven up by shortages, and only a system that combines price control with rationing of available supplies can be effective.”

A Gallup poll confirmed that an overwhelming 89 percent of Americans preferred a system of governmental rationing to “taking the chance of being able to obtain” a product. The 11 percent who disagreed doubtless were those wealthy enough to pay any price, but the vast majority of the public understood the need for rationing. Not only would such a system distribute scarce goods fairly, but it also would prevent inflation—and the declining value of their dollars. By the time that the United States entered the war, both its allies and enemies had been rationing long enough that their models were available. This greatly eased the nation's transition to inflation prevention and a planned economy.

Inflation probably was most evident in rent, and that was hardest to control. New houses could not be built because the military had priority for construction materials, and soon people in the boom towns around military camps and defense



plants found themselves unable to compete with rental prices that soared a hundred percent or more. The new Office of Price Administration (OPA) had its greatest success with rent control in the Washington, D.C., area, where many people were government employees—and where the agency that hired newcomers often arranged to find housing for them in the overcrowded city. Because federal salaries were public information, the OPA eventually became fairly successful at holding rents there to 20 percent of the worker's income.

That was not the case, however, for the millions of women who followed their men to military camps, often in isolated places. Infantrymen, for example, trained for North African combat in similar Arizona deserts, while air cadets learned to fly in the vast open skies over Texas. Women who went to such places understandably competed with each other for the small stock of available housing, and rental prices soared. The OPA ultimately gave up trying to control this inflation, finding that local property owners simply demanded a bribe beyond the rent-controlled price—making servicemen's wives either homeless or law breakers.

Inflated expectations also grew because of the war. Women who had lived in homes without plumbing or a telephone or even electricity prior to the war became accustomed to those things when they served in the military or worked in a defense plant. Rising expectations even can be seen in meat, another area where rationing was imposed because of rising prices. There was no shortage of meat at the source, as farmers and ranchers produced more than in the past. A shortage nonetheless arose, as *Scholastic* magazine announced in late November, 1942, "military demands for meat will take 7,500,000,000 pounds, or almost exactly the total of the increase." The true meaning of "military demands" in this case was that steaks and roasts that graced military mess halls seldom had been seen in Great Depression homes: standards were higher, and greater expectations effectively became another inflationary factor.

It was mostly men who raised meat prices, but women promoted inflation—and therefore rationing—in other areas. One of the first was the era's new nylon stockings. "Women suffered a humiliating run in their national stocking," writer Ann Starrett said wryly, "when the government embargoed silk." Knowing that silk stockings would not be available, and fearing that nylon also would be diverted to military use, many women bought and hoarded all the stockings that they could afford. *Newsweek* reported, again in November of 1942, that "nylons were selling at inflated levels in almost every store in the country." The OPA set price ceilings for this luxury, and soon ordinary clothing and shoes joined the list of rationed items.

The OPA and other agencies that greatly affected women's lives did not have nearly the representation from women at policy-making levels that they should have, but OPA officials Prentiss Brown and Chester Bowles were excellent executives. They explained economics in terms that the public could grasp, and they were especially good about making it clear

that whether or not the economy functioned smoothly was largely dependent on housewives. Women comprehended and cooperated well, and in the end, the system of price controls and rationing did prevent widespread inflation.

When the war ended, even conservative financiers such as the editors of *Business Week* warned against a too-rapid end to government control. They assumed that lifting price ceilings and ending rationing would mean wild inflation and thus a drastic drop in the value of the dollar. That this did not happen to any great degree again can be credited to the economists of the Roosevelt and Truman administrations, who insisted throughout the war that wages keep up with costs. Congress and the White House also saw that pensions for war widows were at a sufficient level to allow a woman with young children to rear them without great worry about the cost of living. Social Security, which had been introduced by the Roosevelt administration a decade earlier, kept the elderly and disabled from falling into indigence, as they likely would have in the past.

Wartime wages also were generous enough that personal savings soared to a level that never since has come even close to being repeated. Partly this was because people responded to patriotic appeals to lend the government money by buying war bonds—and woman played a major role in that. Rallies for buying bond often were led by women, while massive numbers of other women enthusiastically bought them. Most purchasers were motivated by their desire to win the war, but it also was true that there was little available on which to spend their money anyway.

Thus, when the war ended, Americans had an unprecedented level of savings: the average person had an unheard of 25 percent of their disposable income in the bank or in bonds. Much, perhaps even most, of this savings represented the nest eggs of women who worked in defense plants, a class of people who never before earned as much as they did during the war. Many of these women never even had bank accounts earlier in their lives.

Traditional economics would have predicted off-the-charts inflation when rationing ended and all these dollars could flow back into the economy, but although there was some postwar inflation, it was not as great as feared. It took time for defense plants to return to civilian production, and women who had waited for their husbands to return had the patience to wait for a new refrigerator or washing machine at a reasonable price. Many male veterans also wisely invested in education, using their GI Bill benefits for college tuition instead of spending the family savings on a new car. Young people who grew up fast, with death as a daily realism, became highly responsible adults—and a great deal of credit for preventing inflation goes to the young women who, without any formal training in finance, managed their money very well.

*See also:* **bond sales; camp followers; conservation; food shortages; hoarding; defense industries; GI Bill; housework; housing; Office of Price Administration;**

## Pearl Harbor; postwar planning; rationing; wives of servicemen; veterans

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## INTELLIGENCE, MILITARY

As World War II began, Americans still took historic pride in being different from autocratic governments in the rest of the world: the United States respected personal privacy and refrained from developing the espionage systems that European despots long had used to inform themselves on their political enemies. Even in the American Civil War, intelligence gathering was largely a matter of happenstance, and neither side had a bureaucracy devoted to it. This attitude lingered through subsequent wars, and more than a decade after World War I, Cabinet officials in the administration of President Herbert Hoover vetoed the creation of an intelligence agency on the grounds that "gentlemen do not read other gentlemen's mail."

The forerunner of today's CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) was the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), and it developed quietly during the war. The OSS was officially a civilian operation, however, and neither the Army nor the Navy had units such as today's Army Security Agency during World War II. The Army Signal Corps, with its mission of communications, probably was the most comparable to the multiplicity of intelligence agencies that developed in the postwar era. Given that the very existence of intelligence agents was not recognized, it is not surprising that women involved in the work also were not acknowledged. Many women did secret wartime work, however, both in and out of the military.

At the beginning, some people doubted female ability to keep secrets, but Eisenhower himself learned early in the war that the myth of talkative women was untrue. He had seen the service of the first members of the Women's Army Corps (WAC) who went overseas and were assigned to North Africa, where they operated telephone switchboards. This required some to be multilingual, especially in French and Italian, and

their most important duty was to keep the information that they translated absolutely confidential. Major General W. B. Smith soon told the *New York Times Magazine* that they not only "worked like the devil," but also had "proved that they can keep their mouths shut."

They were assigned to the Army Signal Corps, and other WACs in that corps developed and interpreted film that revealed information about enemy capabilities or about the relative success of various types of warfare—something that again called for secrecy. Many WACs in the European Theater of Operations (ETO) were cryptographers, coding and decoding classified messages. Cryptographers worked round the clock, often in buildings with soundproof walls, complexly-locked doors, and other strong security. They did the vital but tedious work of figuring out the exact meaning of radio messages sent by Signal Corps colleagues, disguised so that a listening enemy could not understand.

Author Keith Ayling had come to the same conclusion as General Smith about women and secrecy much earlier. Writing just months after the U.S. entry into the war, he said:

Experience in England proved quite conclusively that women can keep secrets better than men and that women habitually do not talk about government business as much as their husbands and brothers. It may be because you [women] are habitually secretive, because you are not interested enough in military or naval affairs ... or because you have a greater sense of duty than men. I will not argue that out ... but I will lay on the line that there is less careless talk among women employed on government jobs than among men.

His last phrase, "women employed on government jobs," also is important: many women who had security clearances to work in military intelligence were not themselves part of the military. This was true of countless civilian employees at military installations, especially in Washington headquarters. These "government girls" took oaths of secrecy and received clearances at various levels from "confidential" to "secret" to "top secret" and finally, so secret that the clearance level itself was secret. They often worked in the same secure buildings as high-ranking war planners. Their bunker-like offices invariably were crowded, and in an era when almost everyone smoked cigarettes at their desks, the workplace was very nearly a public health hazard.

A degree of secrecy, in fact, was required throughout the many defense industries in which millions of civilian women worked: enemies certainly would like to know how many ships were being built where, what new designs might be rolling out from aircraft factories, and similar information. Women in electronics factories often did not know exactly what it was that they were working on, while those in munitions were accustomed to strong security inspections both coming to and leaving from their job sites. Advertising everywhere reinforced the message that "loose lips sink ships" and that employees should not talk about their jobs outside of the workplace.

Another aspect of military intelligence was censorship, as military censors read letters going to and from overseas

locations. Letter writers soon learned that their mail could be delayed if it contained comments that might prove valuable should it fall into enemy hands. The Office of War Information (OWI) and other agencies publicized the kind of things that would cause the censor's pen to ink out portions of a letter. In a *Good Housekeeping* article, for example, women were told:

Don't identify by name or location factories and facilities engaged in war work. In particular, don't describe new plants.... Don't tell where a war factory is shipping new products ...

Don't identify the country where your soldier is stationed. That's why you address mail for overseas delivery to an Army Post Office ("APO" number) in the United States. Keep the geography anonymous ... Don't identify the unit or branch of service of friends ... Don't write detailed reports of the weather ...

Censors scanned letters for key words, much like the search mechanisms on today's computers. Computerization, in fact, began with the war and was directly related to the cryptology that so many women did. Again, it was mostly "government girls" who used the early keypunch machines, especially at Virginia's Langley Field near the new Pentagon. Women with advanced degrees in math and physics did basic research on artificial intelligence, and the leading pioneer of computer programming and software development was Dr. Grace Hopper. A member of the Navy's WAVES, Hopper spent the war doing her secret work in a basement at Harvard University.

Hopper has become well known, while other women who pioneered data processing by collecting and analyzing a massive accumulation of information remain nearly anonymous. One example is Mary Painter, an economist employed by the OSS. According to author Elizabeth McIntosh, Painter "devised a statistical model for estimating the size of the German submarine fleet in the North Atlantic. Military confirmation after the war showed her work to be startlingly accurate." The OSS gave its employees a great deal of freedom to use their personal intelligence for creative intelligence-gathering techniques, and Painter took thoughtful advantage of that. There was no censorship of mail within the United States, and she wrote her Minnesota family in 1942 that she had "just finished a memorandum on drug companies in Cuba, i.e., certain pro-German drug firms ... I spent yesterday in the Commerce Department going through the new files on these companies. Quite interesting!"

Rhoda K. Hirsch is another example of an unknown woman with a creative project. She worked with intelligence agents in London to develop what everyone now knows as "musac," the background music played in public places. The initial Musac Project was broadcast from England, but pretended to be German, and German soldiers in the ETO tuned to it nightly for music that appealed to their national taste. "The songs," according to McIntosh, "were intended to attract and hold listeners for the news segments," which aimed to convince Germans that they were losing the war and to promote nostalgia for home and the pre-Hitler world.

This, of course, was the same activity for which "Axis Sally" was punished in occupied German and "Tokyo Rose" in Japan.

Other women, primarily civilians—but also some WACs and WAVES—worked on the most innovative and biggest secret of them all, the release of nuclear energy that was fundamental to the atomic bomb. Called the Manhattan Project because of its origins at Columbia University, the project employed at least eighty-five female scientists and mathematicians. An all-female unit of the Coast Guard's SPARS tested LORAN, a highly secret electronic system to track ships at sea. These and many similar projects, of course, were unknown to the public. Much "news," in fact, waited years to be delivered, as the military continued to test its scientific research and development.

Bad news also often was delayed during the war, particularly if it dealt with such things as the annihilation of a new type of plane or an experimental weapon. Because no one wanted the enemy to know which methods were successful, war correspondents could not write of such things until military officials authorized a press release. Even when nothing experimental was at stake, military intelligence often restricted news of losses, especially sunken ships. Hundreds of lives could be lost, and it would not be acknowledged until months afterwards. About one hundred women were credentialed war correspondents for newspapers, magazines, and radio, and they too kept secret much of what they knew, especially early in the war, when the Allies were losing.

Although militarily necessary, the unfortunate result historically has been that the public never knew about many heroic actions of women. Because of secrecy imposed at the time, for example, most people did not learn of the nurses torpedoed on the *Maasdam* before the United States entered the war—or, later, of the WACs whose plane crashed off of Africa just weeks after the end of the European war, or of hundreds of other female fatalities between those. The disguised nature of military intelligence meant that, because everything was secret, risk takers were not rewarded in proportion to their sacrifices. A few women, especially in the OSS, did receive decorations for valor, but most faded away in the postwar world, their contributions unrecognized and their abilities underutilized. OSS employee Julia Child is symbolic: after leaving the spy agency, she transformed herself into the French Chef.

**See also:** Axis Sally; British women; Child, Julia; censorship; cigarettes; correspondents, war; cryptography; defense industries; decorations; electronics industry; European Theater of Operations; fatalities; government girls; Hopper, Grace; letter writing; *Maasdam*; Manhattan Project; munitions; North Africa; Office of War Information; Pacific Theater of Operations; postwar; radio; scientific research and development; Signal Corps; spies; Tokyo Rose; underutilization; WAVES; Women's Army Corps



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## JAPANESE-AMERICAN WOMEN

More than 110,000 American residents of Japanese heritage were forcibly interned in what were essentially concentration camps during World War II. About two-thirds had been born in the United States and thus were citizens, but Japanese Americans were arrested without warrants and held without charges, many for the duration of the war and even longer. Most lost the property they were forced to abandon. Especially for the home-centered women, it was a terribly traumatic experience.

The 1940 census showed 126,947 people of Japanese heritage in the United States; of them, 79,642, or 63 percent, were native-born citizens. Almost all lived on the Pacific Coast, ranging from Alaska down through California. Most worked as families, supporting themselves with small, labor-intensive farms that produced fruits and vegetables for the coast's big cities. Some owned stores, especially grocery stores—another occupation in which the work of women and children was routine. Men sometimes were employed as houseboys or gardeners, but unlike European immigrants, it was almost unheard of for a Japanese woman to work as a domestic servant in an American home. A few were professionals, offering services to their own communities, but most women toiled on small farms; they seldom learned English or otherwise came to understand the world beyond their homes.

They valued education, even for girls, and supported traditional Japanese schools. Some parents sacrificed to send the second generation, called *nesei* in their language, to Japan to be educated. After the war began, however, a Japanese education was a definite strike against a person struggling to get out of internment; governmental forms highlighted that point as a strong negative. Many Japanese-

Americans teenagers, however, attended local high schools and assimilated into American society; again, this was true for both girls and boys. Their families were hard working and grateful for economic opportunity, and they were as shocked by Pearl Harbor as their American neighbors.

Monica Itoi Sone, for example, was a well-adjusted *ni-sei* who had always considered Seattle to be her home; her first-generation parents (or *issei*, in Japanese) were professionals who had arrived before the 1924 Immigration Quota Act not only cut off new arrivals, but also declared Asian immigrants ineligible for citizenship. Monica, though, had been born in the United States and thus was a citizen. She was in her second year of college, but living at home on Sunday 7, 1941:

Henry, Sumi, and I were at choir rehearsal singing ourselves hoarse in preparation for the annual Christmas recital of Handel's "Messiah." Suddenly Chuck Mizuno ... burst into the chapel ...

"Listen, everybody!" he shouted. "Japan just bombed Pearl Harbor ... in Hawaii! It's war!"

The terrible words hit like a blockbuster, paralyzing us. Then we smiled feebly at each, hoping this was one of Chuck's practical jokes ...

I felt as if a fist had smashed my pleasant little existence, breaking it into jigsaw puzzle pieces ... I knew instinctively that the fact that I was an American by birthright was not going to help me escape the consequences of this unhappy war.

Soon, she said, "at least a hundred" family friends had been arrested and their homes searched. FBI agents terrorized a widowed friend with two young children, yelling their demands that she tell them where her husband was—until she finally had the wit to show them a photograph



These Japanese-American women and their families finally are allowed to leave Colorado's Granada Relocation Center in October 1945. *Courtesy of National Archives*

of his funeral, point upwards, and say, "Haben! Haben!" After such searches, women learned that they must discard everything written in Japanese or it would be confiscated as "evidence." The Itoi family spent a long evening making heartbreaking decisions and then cast their memories into the fireplace. Monica, however, could not bring herself to burn a Japanese doll from her grandmother; she gave it to a Caucasian friend.

Others fared much worse, especially in California, where prejudice was greatest. California Attorney General Earl Warren—who later would be vilified for his "liberalism" on the U.S. Supreme Court—helped inflame this bias. According to historian Roger Daniels, Warren said on January 30, 1942, that Japanese-American presence on the West Coast was the "Achilles heel of the entire civilian defense effort ... Unless something is done, it may bring about a repetition of Pearl Harbor." Encouraged by these attitudes, many whites vilified and physically attacked Japanese Americans. Posters appeared in businesses saying that their patronage was unwanted—sometimes in crude language such as "the management poisons rats and Japs." Ignorant vigilantes sometimes mistakenly targeted Chinese Americans, although China was an ally; they and other Asians began wearing badges saying that they were not Japanese.

This race-based violence caused some well-intended people to argue that relocation of Japanese Americans to guarded ghettos could be a valid protection. Many more people, however, in this era of open racism, believed that Japanese Americans should be removed from the coasts because their proximity to vital shipyards and aircraft facilities enabled sabotage. Inland removal also meant that it would be harder for potential spies among them to communicate with Japan.

In fact, immediately after Pearl Harbor and well before the relocation debate, governments in western states sought to prevent espionage or sabotage in a variety of ways. This

varied by state and locality, but some cut communications by banning Japanese schools and other organizations, as well as by imposing curfews. Neighborhoods soon were defined with boundaries: one woman told author Brenda Moore that "even before the evacuation, I couldn't cross the street to go to school." Property was confiscated without compensation, as Japanese Americans were ordered to turn into their local police departments such items as guns, ammunition, cameras, binoculars, and radios. Monica Itoi Sone said that on the very day of the declaration of war, "father could no longer handle financial transactions through his bank accounts;" fortunately, she added, her brother "was of legal age."

Although there never was genuine evidence that any of these people even so much as contemplated espionage or sabotage against the United States, the push to force them inland continued. Records in the Washington State Archives indicate that some civilians, especially Governor Arthur B. Langlis, feared the proposed relocation would prove wrong, but these elected officials were overruled by War Department officials, especially Lt. Gen. J. L. DeWitt, the San Francisco-based head of Army's Western Defense Command. Twelve days after Pearl Harbor, DeWitt sent a confidential memo to Governor Langlie that began: "I cannot emphasize to you too strongly the very real menace at this time to the national safety which arises from the presence ... of the considerable number of enemy aliens ... in your state."

DeWitt continued with census figures that showed more than four times as many Washingtonians had been born in Germany or Italy (both of which had declared war against the U.S.) as in Japan, but nonetheless zeroed in on the latter. He offered no proof for his assertion "of fifth column activity and sabotage, particularly in Hawaii and the Philippines"—something that, when the situation in those places calmed enough for eye-witness testimony, would prove almost wholly untrue. Instead of harming the United States, there would be hundreds of cases of Hawaiians and Filipinos,



including those of Japanese heritage, who risked their lives for Americans. But that was not yet known in December of 1941, and the general insisted that Governor Langlie use “every means at your command [to] bring the actual and potential sources of such activities under the closest possible surveillance.”

On January 29, U.S. Attorney General Nicholas Biddle issued orders that all “enemy aliens,” or citizens of nations with whom the United States was at war, must register their presence with their local post office—something that again was applicable to many more Germans and Italians than Japanese. More time passed without any of the predicted sabotage, but military pressure for Japanese American evacuation did not abate. Again some elected officials gently protested, as a February 8 letter on the stationery of the Chicago-based Council of State Governments warned:

It is important to America's food supply that Japanese contribution to such industries as vegetable growing be maintained. Persecution of aliens, commercial exploitation of the helpless, discrimination against loyal groups on racial grounds is a betrayal of the principles for which we have gone to war. Alert and vigilant citizens can aid ... by not taking the police powers into their own hands, but by transmitting any evidence of subversive activity to the nearest office of the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

Despite this urge for calm, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order #9066 on February 19, authorizing the War Department to remove people of Japanese descent from militarized areas according to the judgment of area officials. Forced evacuations soon were underway in California—and when a three-member congressional committee held hearings in Seattle on February 28, its chairman, U.S. Representative John H. Tolan of California, made it clear that already there were problems. “In San Francisco,” he said, “the offices of the police department were packed with cameras and radios ... Evidently no planning had been done as to the disposition and care of ... property.” Representative Carl T. Curtis of Nebraska expressed concern that “any evacuation is going to cause ... difficulty and hardship, especially on the small children and the women and old people.” The committee's third member, Representative Laurence F. Arnold of Illinois, also had hesitations. “If these alien and citizen Japanese...are taken from the area,” he asked, “how do you feel about the farming situation? Will you be able to operate?”

On Washington's Bainbridge Island, Mildred and Walt Woodward, editors of the *Bainbridge Review*, also pleaded for reason. They argued that the island's strawberry growers not only were loyal, but also vital to the production of vitamin-filled food. Nonetheless, the War Relocation Authority (WRA) was created on March 18, and organized removal from coastal areas soon followed. General DeWitt's order on how to prepare for this evacuation vacillated between saving space on army transportation and telling evacuees—especially the women who would do the packing—to take enough to avoid being burdensome. He said that they “must carry with them the following property”:

- (a) blankets and linens for each member of the family
- (b) toilet articles for each member of the family
- (c) clothing for each member of the family
- (d) sufficient knives, forks, spoons, plates, bowls and cups for each member of the family
- (e) all items carried will be securely packaged, tied and plainly marked with the name of the owner ...

Nor were they told where they were going—because the army itself did not yet know—so women could not pack clothing suitable to that unknown climate. Worse, most families had only about two weeks to make final arrangements for their homes, farms, or other property. Many were forced to sell to greedy neighbors at bargain prices; others found someone to care for things, but only could hope that these promises would be kept. Pets had to be given away; they were not allowed to accompany families. And once goodbyes were said, they could not return to an area declared off-limits.

Some, especially young women who spoke English and had employment skills, hurried to find jobs in inland areas so that they could avoid internment. All such arrangements had to be approved by officials of the WRA, however, and in a time prior to quick communications, most had to go to the camps and then finalize their escape routes. Nor were the camps ready to receive them at first. More than five thousand were evacuated from Bainbridge Island, for example, loaded into the backs of army trucks and taken by ferry and land to the Puyallup fairgrounds, about thirty miles south of Seattle—and not appreciably further inland than they had been before. There according to author James R. Warren, they lived on the parking lot, in “flimsy temporary quarters.” He summarized:

Most Japanese Americans complied with the orders without complaint but it was a wrenching experience. Tearful teenagers said goodbye to high school friends. Where one spouse was not of Japanese extraction, married couples were separated ... Most families lost the bulk of their belongings ... Many Nisei businessmen lost their investments. Not one Japanese-American was found guilty of spying or in any way supporting the enemy. Indeed, many young males joined the Army ... [and an] all Japanese American regiment became one of the most decorated units of the war.

At first, however, *nesei* males who had been eligible for the draft found their classifications changed; about a year passed before, early in 1943, the military decided to allow them to volunteer; a year, later, in January of 1944, they were again drafted under Selective Service rules. But in early 1942, both young men and young women went with their families to one of a dozen internment camps that opened for them—eventually. “Temporary” at the Puyallup fairgrounds, for instance, turned out to be from early May to late August, when that group finally was transferred by train to Idaho. These temporary locales were called “assembly centers,” and the last group to be moved from an assembly center to a “relocation center” went from Fresno, California, to Jerome, Arkansas. They finally reached that mosquito-filled place in

the Mississippi River delta on November 3—almost a full year after Pearl Harbor began disrupting their lives. (Ironically, Jerome was also the first camp to close; its internees were sent to other camps in June 1944.)

Relatively few Japanese Americans lived in the Alaska Territory, but they and the natives on the Aleutian islands probably fared the worst of any detainees. The U.S. military rounded them up and moved them onto the Pribilof Islands around Funter Bay, where they lived in abandoned mining and fishing camps. The water was contaminated; there was no medical attention; and approximately 10 percent died. Mainland internees generally were treated better, although almost all families were forced to live in crowded quarters, often 8 × 10 cubicles that were essentially unfurnished and sometimes lacked even walls. Many women hung sheets or blankets to create some privacy for their families.

From California, Oregon, and Washington, Japanese-American families were sent to six inland states, as well as to two camps in the interior deserts of Southern California. Arizona and Arkansas had two camps each, while Colorado, Idaho, Utah, and Wyoming each had one. The largest—and most troublesome, from a military viewpoint—was California's Tule Lake, with 18,789 detainees at its peak. The second-largest camp was Poston, Arizona, with 17,814. Even the smallest, though, was more a town than a village; 7,318 were interned at Granada, Colorado.

All of the receiving states had climates harsher than that of the Pacific Coast, and detainees often lacked appropriate clothing. The trauma of being imprisoned, of course, was even worse. Oregon's Mrs. Itsu Akiyama, for example, told author Linda Tamura about her arrival at California's Pinedale Assembly Center: "I remember seeing a large cactus when our train stopped ..., so I guessed that we have arrived at a hot place. We were completely fenced in, and there were watchtowers with soldiers bearing rifles." Mrs. Misuyo Nakamura added, "I saw a soldier with a rifle ... I was very frightened! I was sure he had designs on shooting us!" Previously proud and independent people not only were reduced to fearfulness, but also to dependency, having no choice but to turn for all of their needs to their jailers.

Another difficult adjustment for many was to the unfamiliar food. Monica Itoi Sone said that her mother packed a large container of soy sauce into one of the two suitcases each person was allowed, but, of course, it would not be nearly enough for the years she would be there. Nor could they bring what they wanted for spiritual needs: most *issei* were Buddhists, and another Washingtonian, Sonoji Saki, would spend her time at the Hunt Detention Center in Idaho finding the materials to build a small but elaborate prayer shrine. Some detention centers made efforts to create occupational therapy for women, especially in traditional arts such as flower arranging, and some older women and men re-adopted traditional Asian early-morning outdoor calisthenics. In this and other ways, many *issei* returned to the Old World fatalism that drove their *nesei* children to distraction.

A few began to get out of internment even before they

moved to the permanent camps. Just four months after the evacuation order and well before everyone had moved from the assembly centers, the U.S. Agricultural Department joined the chorus of those who predicted that relocation would be a mistake. In a memo dated July 18, 1942, an official of that department wrote:

The labor situation ... is extremely acute and there appears to be rather a unanimous opinion among the growers, businessmen and farm organizations ... to the use of whatever Japanese may be willing ... I believe we have at least a fair chance of obtaining [from the army] a modification of the boundaries of this military zone, thereby clearing the way to negotiations for securing some of the Japanese ... The War Department will release Japanese from assembly centers under conditions prescribed by the War Relocation Authority ...

The probability was that detainees released for farm work would be young men, but two other significant things involving women occurred in the same month. The first of several test cases on the civil rights of Japanese-American citizens was filed by a woman, Mitsuye Endo: by a 5–3 vote, the all male, all-white U.S. Supreme Court would reject her *habeas corpus* suit in December, 1943. The second event of July, 1942 was formation of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC, later WAC). African American, Chinese American, and other minorities were eligible to enlist from its beginning; acceptance of Japanese-American women waited until the following April.

Yet, although the war would continue for more than two years, few *nesei* women emulated their brothers and opted for army life. Of approximately twenty-two thousand eligible women, the total who enlisted was appreciably smaller than the five hundred that the WAC set as its initial recruitment goal. With Japanese-American women in mind, the WAC dropped its height requirement to fifty-seven inches and its minimum weight to ninety-five pounds, but eminent WAC historian Mattie Treadwell nevertheless would summarize:

Considerable numbers of *nisei* recruits had been expected ... The [WAC] Director's staff went to some pains to [recruit them] ... Some five hundred *nisei* recruits were wanted for employment as translators, but in spite of visits of WAC recruiters to relocation centers, only thirteen could be obtained in the first six months of enlistment, and negligible numbers thereafter. Parental opposition to military service for women was believed to have been the chief deterrent ... Somewhat later, the Military Intelligence Language School was able to locate and enlist a few more women ...

The corps' hope of hundreds turned into dozens, as recruiters found that traditional Japanese culture was highly patriarchal, and parents refused to allow their daughters to join this new venture. Nor was it only the elderly who objected to the innovation: Grace Harada told author Moore that after she joined the WAC and encountered male *nesei*, the men thought that she and other female *nesei* were "terrible." That most young women seemed to prefer detention-camp

life to army life can be seen in the fact that eight months passed before the first detainee joined the WAC. She was Iris Watanbee of Santa Cruz, California; with other women, she was sworn in at a December 1943 ceremony in the Colorado governor's office.

Those who did enlist had an experience similar to that of virtually all WACs: they learned new skills, traveled to new places, and generally found themselves much more mature and capable at the war's end. By the time that they joined, the WAC's primary basic-training camp for enlistees was at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, which meant a huge geographic and cultural change for Japanese Americans. Unlike African-American WACs, Japanese-American WACs did not have segregated living quarters, but like African Americans, some were assigned after training to sort mail. Millions of letters weekly went overseas during the war, and mail was important to soldiers; it was a duty that truly mattered and especially required attention to detail.

The most notable *neisei* WACs were the several dozen who were assigned to military intelligence because of their language skills. After attending the army's linguistic school at Fort Snelling, Minnesota, most went on to Camp Ritchie, Maryland, where they specialized in translating captured Japanese information. Other military occupational specialties (MOS) that were assigned to Japanese-American women were akin to those assigned to both white and black women. Most were the ubiquitous clerical and typist positions; some were photographers, parachute packers, motor pool drivers, mechanics, and more. A few were assigned to the Army Medical Corps, where they worked in army hospitals. According to Moore, this included physician Yoshiye Togaski and dentist Masako Moriya. At Fort Knox, Kentucky, Lillian Higashi held the unusual position of chaplain's assistant.

Instead of joining the WAC (and no other military services recruited them), most women stayed at the detention centers. In time, some of them, especially *issei*, even said they found them a welcome break from a lifetime of toil. Perhaps these women were trying desperately to be positive, but according to Linda Tamura, some records of camp life seemed to go well beyond fatalistic acceptance. Already before reaching her permanent camp, Mrs. Itsu Akiyama kept a diary and wrote of her arrival in Idaho: "At the gate was a big welcome sign, and people we did not know gave us cups of soda water and cookies. It made me so happy to be welcomed in this way!" Another, who was sent to Wyoming, termed the Heart Mountain Center a "nice place ... When we arrived, the mess hall served sashimi because we were newcomers."

*Nesei* were more likely to be discontented, but in the long term, young women were surprised to find that detention life put them in new positions of power relative to their previously dominant fathers. The complete disruption of traditional ways meant that arranged marriages became almost impossible to arrange, and women had more freedom in the decision of whether or not they would marry at all. Camps also were run with detainee labor, and women and men earned equal wages for the same job.



The first group of specially trained Japanese American or "Nisei" WACs ready for departure from Hamilton Field, California, for duty in the Civil Censorship Office, US Army General Headquarters, Tokyo, Japan, late 1945. Many are graduates of the University of Hawaii. *U.S. Army Signal Corps Photo*

When schools were set up for camp children, women worked as teachers. Some camps published newspapers, and women were on those staffs. Takako Taxie Kusanoki, for instance, joined the WAC after writing for *The Granada Pioneer* at the Colorado center. Still, few detention-center jobs were challenging, and the pay was low: Monica Itoi Sone, for example, earned \$16 a month as a stenographer in her camp's administrative office, while unskilled American laborers working outside her window made \$12 a day. Educated young women who wanted to leave the detention centers tried to find inland civilian jobs, but both the job and their intended residence had to be approved by the War Relocation Authority (WRA), a process that usually took months.

Indeed, a consequence unintended by the "conservatives" who had created this structure was that the WRA became a bureaucracy dealing with many social workers, most of them white women. Thousands of case files in the Washington State Archives show the complexity of taking on the management of so many individual lives, as each case was detailed on a form titled "Basic Family Fact Sheet." Labeled "confidential," it listed names, gender, marital status, birth date and place, religion, education, dates of residence in Japan, and other information.

A fact sheet for two-member Ehama family serves as an example: Sayo Ehama was born in Japan in 1897 and thus was forty-five years old when a WRA social worker took her case. She had immigrated in 1917 and lived in Portland. Her husband died; two sons were drafted; and a third had a draft-exempt job with the railroad in Spokane. She and her youngest child, twelve-year-old Mary, wanted permission and some financial assistance so that they could leave their Utah center. She planned to "rent an apartment at the Park Hotel at 232 Riverside Drive, Spokane. This hotel is operated by ...



a former acquaintance.” Ehama, who spoke English “fairly well,” also “said she had many Caucasian friends,” and listed some as character references.

Similar sad stories live on in these bureaucratic forms. According to a social worker with the Wisconsin Department of Public Welfare, for another example, sixteen-year-old Lily Kazuko Akaji, a Seattle native, had been released from the Idaho camp in June of 1945. “Arrangements have been made,” the memo continued, “for her to live at the Madison home of Dr. and Mrs. Thomas Tormey,” but the social worker wanted to know if Lily’s parents would be released soon and what their intentions were. The family’s disintegration is clear in that Lily believed an older sister was in the Cadet Nurse Corps in Elgin, Illinois, while another was thought to be “in Chicago doing secretarial work.” A Buddhist church leader in Seattle was asked to sort out all this.

The military commander who replaced DeWitt lifted the evacuation order on December 17, 1944, allowing Japanese Americans to return to their former homes. Many, however, had nowhere to go and no money to get there. Release forms included a space for assets, and by far the majority listed “none.” Momye Fujiwara was a poignant exception: a sixty-eight-year-old widow who had lived outside of Tacoma, she listed \$5 in cash and a \$16 check. Like others, she needed help to resume her life, but that process necessarily took time. When the war with Japan ended in August 1945, some forty-four thousand Japanese Americans remained in the centers. The last to close, California’s Tule Lake, operated until March 1946.

The unwanted but nonetheless essential growth of bureaucracy and welfare dependency was one ironic result of attitudes towards Japanese Americans; another irony is that those treated best were not yet “Americans” in the sense of living in a state. The Hawaii Territory—the only U.S. soil that actually was bombed by Japan—had by far the best record of dealing with residents of Japanese heritage. The majority of female *nesei* who joined the WAC were Hawaiians—and yet, in still another irony, most served on the East Coast, not in the Pacific Theater of Operations (PTO) where their language skills could have been an asset. Indeed, one of the war’s most serious examples of underutilization may be the fact that just one Japanese-American WAC, Ruth Fujii of Hawaii, was assigned to the PTO. In the postwar period, however, some would be assigned to Japan.

Few Americans were aware of the trauma experienced by citizens of Japanese heritage during World War II, especially those who did not live on the West Coast. Even there, the story was reported so cursorily that many did not understand its reality: when in March, 1942, for example, the Itoi family tried to get farming friends to take over their Seattle business, the farm family did not know of the evacuation, even though they lived only about twenty-five miles away. National magazines, especially those aimed at women, also ignored the topic. One of very few exceptions was a *Harper’s* article by Eugene V. Rostov, whose piece was published in June, 1945—after the relocation order was lifted, but before the

end of the war with Japan. The language Rostov used made it clear that he assumed even *Harper’s* well-informed readers had no knowledge of what had taken place.

Yet enough information was available that Dorothy Swaine Thomas could co-author the first of two books on the subject already in 1946. At almost four hundred, fine-print pages, the documentation was evident for anyone who cared to look, and within a few years, officials who had supported the relocation began to recant. When its twenty-fifth anniversary occurred in 1967, historian Roger Daniels led a conference on the subject and said: “We could not find anyone in southern California to stand up and say that the evacuation was justified.” Yet it took the nation more than more decades to offer any recompense. Many of the victims of this rush to judgment were long dead by the sixtieth anniversary, when Congress authorized a investigative commission. Its 1992 report was aptly titled *Personal Justice Denied*.

**See also:** African-American women; Cadet Nurse Corps; Chinese-American women; Civil Defense; food shortages; enemy aliens; intelligence, military; letter writing; males, comparisons with; military occupational specialty; Pacific Theater of Operations; pay; Pearl Harbor; physicians; postwar; refugees; underutilization; Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps

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## JENSEN, AGNES (1914–)

Born in Duluth Minnesota, Agnes Jensen, who called herself “Jens,” lived in Stanwood, Michigan, when she joined the Army Nurse Corps (ANC). She joined the ANC in February, 1941, before the United States entered the war, and was just twenty-nine years old when she led a harrowing, two-month, eight hundred-mile sojourn out of enemy-occupied territory.

Like the twelve nurses with her, whose ages ran from twenty-three to thirty-two, she was just a second lieutenant when their plane crashed in Albania on November, 8, 1943. The ANC was notoriously slow with promotions, though, and Jensen’s credentials should have made her a first lieutenant. Despite the lack of rank, her ANC seniority meant that she was in command of the women—but nurses typically acted in a non-hierarchical, cooperative fashion. Also on the plane were thirteen male medics, all of them enlisted personnel and thus outranked by the female lieutenants. The flight crew consisted of four men, the highest-ranked of whom was

merely a twenty-four-year-old first lieutenant. A leader not only because of her rank and experience, Jensen also kept a journal and—decades later—published it.

The country where they found themselves remains a corner of the world that gets little attention, but Albania is just east of the Italian peninsula; the two nations are separated only by the Adriatic Sea. In April 1939, under the fascist regime of Benito Mussolini, Italy easily conquered Albania. Its king fled to England, where he soon would be joined by other royal families as Germany’s Adolf Hitler conquered other nations. Four years later, however, when Jensen’s plane crashed, Mussolini had been displaced in Italy, and it was German Nazis that controlled Albania. The most primitive of European nations, electricity and motorized vehicles were rare there; indeed, according to writers Evelyn Monahan and Rosemary Neidel, Albania had “only 26 miles of paved road” in 1943.

The plane, an Army C-53, was on its way from Sicily to Bari, on the southeastern coast of Italy, when the pilot became disoriented in snow and wind. After five hours of flying in circles, much of it over the Adriatic, ice formed on the wings; also nearly out of fuel, he crash landed when he spotted a valley between mountains. The plane’s “nose buried itself in the ground,” but miraculously, no one was killed.

The survivors, of course, had no idea where they were—and when they realized that it was German-occupied territory, they faced another challenge in deciding whether or not their rescuers could be trusted. The first to assist them was man called Hassan, who had learned English from Red Cross workers; later, a suspiciously affluent man named Steffa took over that role—but many times during their ordeal, Jensen feared that they were about to be betrayed to the Germans. Four days after the crash, for instance, the survivors:

entered the town of Berat on a cobblestone street lined with people ... The crowd sang songs, threw flowers at the Americans’ feet, and snapped their pictures. The group was flabbergasted. How did these people know they were coming?... How could their movements and whereabouts be secret when so many people knew the answers ...

According to the translator, the Albanians were welcoming them as an invasion force finally come to help them. How could anyone mistake a group of seventeen men and thirteen women, all limping ... for an invasion force?

When Jensen posed that question to Steffa, he replied, “Our women are guerrillas and have fought along with our men for years”—yet during the saga that was to come, Albanian women only rarely would appear. Fighting, however, soon resumed, as it became apparent that Germans knew Americans were hiding in Berat. They bombed the town, and Nazi planes followed up by strafing the road on which the Americans tried to escape. In the chaos, seven nurses went missing, and the next day, a sniper’s bullet barely missed Jensen’s head. Men were wounded, and the group waited until dark to crawl to safety. The following days were similarly wretched. In addition to being shot at, she and others went without food from Sunday until late Thursday, when

This exhibit at the Women In Military Service For America Memorial, Ceremonial Entrance to Arlington National Cemetery commemorates Agnes Jensen, pictured on left, and other Army nurses who endured an 800-mile winter trek out of the Albanian mountains, after their plane crashed in the Nazi-occupied territory. *Photo by Britta Granrud of the Women In Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*



someone finally gave them cornbread. Four of the missing nurses rejoined them then, but joy at the reunion was tempered by the question of whether their separation had been intentional.

Still, they had no choice but to follow Steffa's advice and climb higher into the mountains, away from the Germans. There, Jensen said, "bone-chilling wind ... had one beneficial effect: it numbed aching feet and dulled the pain" of their injuries. Most by then had dysentery and "had to run behind the bushes ... with no paper to help with sanitation." At more than eight thousand feet, snowstorms were more brutal than any Jensen remembered from Minnesota, and the clothes they had worn on the plane were far from adequate. Nor did anyone feel confident that they knew where they were going as they zigzagged their uphill way, adding many more miles to their sojourn than if they had been on flat land. When they finally reached a safe house, Albanians told them that no one who knew those mountains would have attempted this climb in winter.

There they were able to rest and wash the clothes that they had worn for almost a month. British espionage agents operating in Albania meanwhile had learned of their existence, and from early December they had guides who could be trusted. Although some of the men were in such poor condition that they had to be half-dragged through three-foot snow, they soon set out again on the long march to safety.

This time, Jensen enjoyed the additional warmth of wrapping herself in a yellow silk parachute from the British, but their bodies were so stressed that "most of the women stopped menstruating after the first couple of weeks." Lice lived despite the cold, and the nurses had to check themselves regularly against that disease breeder. Dysentery and nausea also continued, as bodies refused to process what little food they got. People at some safe houses shared nourishing food, with one elderly couple even giving them oranges, but others could not be tempted even by the gold coins the British offered. Because of the German occupation, Albanians realistically feared starvation before the winter ended, and they wanted to keep what little food they had. Jensen's nausea intensified after the most bizarre of many food-related notes

that she made. The women were secreted on the second floor of a house when:

the downstairs door opened, and they could hear a man speaking in Albanian. All eyes turned to the stairs as he walked up with a skinned animal on his shoulder. He nodded to the women, laid the animal on the floor ... and announced, "Sheep." Before anyone could say a word, he had started down the stairs ... The women who had pocket knives in the musette bags got them out and began hacking ...

Emotional problems, too, became almost as bad as the physical. "Some individuals grated on each other's nerves," Jensen said, and "a few were almost blood enemies ... over things that would not have mattered back in Sicily." The worst quarrel was when they discovered that two women had cigarettes taken from the plane and hoarded them for weeks. On Christmas Eve, however, the group put these arguments aside and gathered around "a small cedar bough ... decked out in small red ribbons" that a woman had in her musette bag. Jensen added that although the area's residents were "at least 70 percent of the Muslim faith," Steffa led them to a Greek Orthodox church. They listened through a service they could not understand, and then sang carols and the Star Spangled Banner.

New Years was less noted, but on January 7, 1944, the British agents were able to tell them that a boat would be waiting on a southern peninsula near Vlore, if they could press on before the Germans noticed it. "Everyone agreed except Thrasher," the young pilot ostensibly in command:

"It's up to the girls," he said, pushing the decision onto the women. "If they can take it, we can."

The nurses were furious. "What do you mean, if the girls can take it! We've been on our feet all the way, haven't we? And who has been taking care of all of you when you got sick?"

Thrasher cringed.

With three mules commandeered at gunpoint from an Albanian reluctant to lend them, the sickest rode through deep snow as they traveled through a moonlit night to Dukat. There they had tea with the first sugar they had eaten



since the crash, and after a brief rest, resumed their hurried way at 2:00 in the morning. They made their last descent after nearly forty-eight hours of clambering up and down a mountain pass, much of it in the dark, with dangerous rock ledges covered in snow.

When they reached the port, the mariners said that they had hidden their boat for most of a month, while they waited for the would-be survivors. "How wonderful," Jensen thought, "to be part of an organization that values individual life so highly, an organization whose members would risk their lives gladly to rescue a downed comrade." Within hours, they were at their November destination, the American hospital at Bari.

As intelligence officers debriefed them, however, Jensen had to surrender her diary because the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the forerunner of the CIA, could discern useful information from its details. OSS agents then concentrated on rescuing the three women who had been left behind in the bombing of Berat. They were the oldest of the group: Helen Porter of Hanksville, Utah, was thirty; Wilma Lytle of Butler, Kentucky was thirty-one, and Ann Maness of Paris, Texas was thirty-two.

In a February 24 memo about Albanian partisans who were being paid by the OSS, Major Lloyd Smith said that several of these men "had promised to bring the nurses ... and had done nothing." Their leader, a man named Hodo, made excuses, including debate on the proposed route of escape. Hodo added, according to Smith, that "he could not understand why the nurses should have any say in the matter. He remarked, 'We always tell our women what to do.'"

After more procrastination, the three finally escaped from their five months as effectively prisoners of war by dressing as Albanians. They were stopped by German patrols, but managed to travel by truck and car until a last nighttime trek on March 19, 1944. "By daybreak," said Smith, "we were high enough on the mountain to be out of sight of any Germans." They descended the next afternoon, and "the nurses," according to Smith, "were given the most comfortable cave to recuperate."

Agnes Jensen meanwhile was released from the Bari hospital on January 21 and returned to her parents' Michigan farm. There she learned that she had been reported missing on November 26, and her family had a distressful holiday season. After the furlough, she worked as an instructor in the ANC's flight-nursing school at Bowman, Kentucky, and then—when the army decided to publicize the incident—went on tour to sell war bonds. She lived through her second crash landing in less than a year, when a C-47 carrying the war-bond troupe had engine problems and made an emergency landing in an Iowa field.

The public learned a bit more about the Albanian escape when *Collier's* published an article on it in April 1944. This was just a month after the release of the last nurses, and some newspapers had covered the story even earlier. Presumably army press officials did not consider it to be a military secret, but the Army Nurse Corps did almost nothing to honor the

bravery of these women. Unlike the nurses of Bataan and Corregidor, there was little publicity and no White House ceremony to reward their heroism.

This may have been due to the fact that the ANC then was commanded by the excessively humble Florence Blanchfield, whereas the commander during Bataan/Corregidor was Julia Flikke. The title of Flikke's 1943 book, *Nurses in Action*, shows something of her personality—while Blanchfield probably feared that publicity on such perils would damage recruiting, which was the ANC's most serious problem in 1944. The times themselves were another factor in the lack of attention: the bravery of nurses in the Pacific early in the war provided a rallying point, whereas by 1944, the nation had heard a great deal about heroism.

Jensen continued to serve in the European Theater of Operations, and prior to leaving the military in May 1946, earned three major decorations, including the World War II Victory Medal. She married Harry Leo Mangerich, a tax expert for the Internal Revenue Service who had served with the Army Air Force in Labrador. They lived in Bethesda, Maryland, had two children, and enjoyed traveling to his assignments in several foreign nations. He died in 1992, and Agnes Mangerich was inspired to publish her diary (along with military documents related to the rescue, including those from Major Smith) in 1997. Then at age eighty-three, she took a grandson to the Smithsonian Air and Space Museum, where, she said, "heads turned" when "Jonathan pointed at the C-47 ... and asked, 'Is that Grandma's plane she crashed in Albania?'"

**See also:** Army Nurse Corps; Bataan; Blanchfield, Florence; bonds; cigarettes; Corregidor; European Theater of Operations; decorations; flight nurses; Flikke, Julia; food; intelligence, marriage; military; postwar; prisoners of war; rank; recruitment; refugees; Red Cross; spies

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## JEWISH-AMERICAN WOMEN

Like African-American, Chinese-American, and Japanese-American women, as well as the German-born or Italian-born who were termed "enemy aliens," World War II had a stronger-than-average effect on Jewish-American women.

By the mid-1930s, it was clear that Hitler's Germany was going to war against its own Jews; by the mid-1940s, it was clear that this was being done in a shockingly calculated way, with enslavement and starvation followed by death for healthy

adults and systematic extermination of those who could not work. Not only were Germany's Jews to be killed, but also those of nations that the Nazis conquered. Some nations, especially Poland, raised little objection to the mass murder of civilians; others, especially Holland and Denmark, tried hard to protect their citizens of this ethnic minority. Ultimately, however, some six million, including gypsies, homosexuals, and other "undesirables" would die in the Nazi's cynically-named "concentration camps."

Many Jewish Americans initially found the stories that filtered back from Europe literally incredible, but as the evidence mounted and as they recalled their ancestors' experience with pogroms, there was no choice but to believe that right-wing extremism, in fact, had gone to this inhuman extreme. Getting the point across to other Americans, the vast majority of whom were Christian, would prove much more difficult. In large part, this was because most Americans saw Christianity and patriotism as virtually synonymous and did not hear the anti-Semitic message between rhetorical lines.

Another important factor in the denial of reality was the attitudes of the media and even the Office of War Information. Media executives did not publicize the genocide, partly because of their own excessiveness in World War I. Public relations and advertising were new fields then, and "patriotic" promotion of that war was, in fact, hyperbolic. After the end of what then was called "the Great War," leaders saw that the ultimate result of their propaganda against the "Huns" was an unfortunate distrust and cynicism about all government. As a result, World War II propaganda was much more restrained—to the point of failing to tell the truth about the horrors that actually were happening, especially in Europe. Anti-Japanese propaganda was more common, but even it usually stressed Japan's breaches of military conduct against American soldiers, not the outrages committed on civilians, especially women. Slogans about fascism and freedom substituted for personalized reports about fear and fatal concentration camps, as the government and media failed to bring the war, especially the war on Jews, to the forefront. While Americans read of civilians killed in open warfare, they seldom heard of gas chambers and mass graves.

Only leftist and Jewish publications reported reality, and even many leftist writers were not prepared to believe that the land of Bach and Beethoven had descended to such depths that it would exterminate Mendelssohn's kin. Indeed, even many Jewish leaders refused to accept the ghastly truth. Author Edward S. Shapiro makes that point, especially accusing Americanized sophisticates of deliberate ignorance and apathy: "the price the New York intellectuals paid for their intellectual independence and their cosmopolitanism was political irresponsibility and moral insensitivity." He also cites Jewish-American scholar Ruth Wisse's words about "the failures of the New York intellectuals ... [and] their disregard of the Jewish fate, both before and during World War II."

These commentators emphasized New York City because more than 40 percent of American Jews lived there in 1948. Chicago was in second place, and only 6 percent of its popu-

lation was Jewish. Two-thirds of American Jewry lived in just ten cities, and all except Los Angeles were in the East. This self-segregation reinforced biases against Jews in the Midwest and South, where many people had no personal experience with them.

It also is important to remember that the great influx of Jewish immigration had occurred in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century; when the war began in 1939, the majority still was made up of first or second-generation immigrants. Prejudice against them was routine: forty years earlier, for example, when the 1893 depression was the nation most serious to date, hungry Jewish children in New York's City's public schools were required to join in a Christian prayer before they could eat. Jews were powerful enough in that city to change such rules by the Great Depression of the 1930s, but when World War II began, many—perhaps even most—country clubs and other elitist organizations still refused to accept Jewish members. Especially for people who had tried hard to leave Old World ways behind and to assimilate into American media and business leadership, there was little incentive to risk careers by pointing out the beyond-belief story of the Holocaust—a word that was itself not yet used.

Nor did First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt have much success in pushing her husband to take leadership on this issue. He died prior to end of the war and the confirmation of its death camps, but in the 1930s, when Jews were fleeing Germany and its annexed areas, Franklin Roosevelt did not encourage revision of immigration quotas to allow Hitler's refugees into the United States. The most outstanding of these incidents of apathy was the voyage of the *St. Louis* in May and June of 1939. Packed with 936 German Jews, the ship was not allowed to land at its original destination of Cuba, and after lingering on the Florida coast, also was denied permission to land on U.S. soil. After thirty-nine days at sea and short of supplies, the ship carried its "human cargo" back to Hamburg, where, said author Haskel Lookstein, "a terrible fate awaited the frantic passengers."

Even after the war began, the War Department did not necessarily heed Jewish pleas. Some Jewish leaders asked that U.S. planes target Auschwitz in the summer of 1944, when the Army Air Corps regularly bombed near it, but orders for this selective bombing were not given. Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt had many close friends who were Jewish, and several served in high positions in his administration—but unanimity on this subject was hard to obtain. Even now, both Jews and non-Jews are ambivalent about the wisdom of bombing that inevitability would have killed innocents. Roosevelt did create the War Refugee Board in January 1944, which sought to help both Jews and non-Jews escaping from fascists. That also was an objective of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), the nation's first espionage agency.

In this context of apathy and ambivalence on the part of both governmental and media, it was hard for Jewish-American women to demonstrate the wartime activism that many doubtless wished, in hindsight, that she had shown. Still,

Jewish women arguably did more than the average American woman, much of it through organizations such as Hadassah. Founded in 1912 by Baltimore's Henrietta Szold to encourage the era's "Americanization" while also retaining Jewish heritage, Hadassah thus was less than three decades old when war was declared. It already had built an enviable record—again quoting Shapiro—with "its emphasis on practical and concrete activities to alleviate suffering." The National Council of Jewish Women was even older, having grown out of feminist networking at the 1893 World's Fair in Chicago. Founded by Hannah Greenbaum Solomon, its rapid growth to fifty chapters within its first three years demonstrated the desire of Jewish women to organize. Largely composed of German Jews, its charity sustained the Jews of Russia and eastern Europe who arrived in the next decades.

In World War II, these women led relief efforts for Jews who managed to escape from Europe and especially worked with the many homeless refugees in the postwar world. Still, it was this postwar world and the creation of a Jewish state that dominated what little wartime discussion their publications for members devoted to the crisis of European Jews. Author Lookstein, for example, says that "the monthly *Hadassah Newsletter* emphasized its parochial concerns at the expense of educating its readership." Many women regretted later that they had not done more and done it sooner: Lookstein also quotes the 1977 national president of Hadassah as saying, "the chief lesson of the Holocaust is that we were silent when we should have shouted."

Beyond the Holocaust, individual Jewish-American women had special wartime concerns. First of all, their response to the draft—or even to voluntary enlistment—was likely to be more traumatic than that of most women. Especially for the large number of Jews whose homeland was Russia, sending sons or husbands or brothers to the czar's army was much like a death sentence. Conditions were so bad, especially for persecuted Jews, that many men chose to permanently maim themselves rather than go into the army and be subject to Cossack officers. Especially older women retained these fearful attitudes in America, and author Deborah Dash Moore cites cases of Brooklyn women giving their sons what essentially were amulets. Whether it was merely out of respect for their mothers or not, men accepted these protections from evil.

Many Christians did the same with crucifixes, but when Jewish men were drafted, a particular worry for orthodox women was the fact that the era's military took no notice of kosher food. "Eating ham for Uncle Sam" became the generally accepted attitude, but it was hard for many to choke down the breakfast bacon or other *treyf*. The army's limited number of dieticians were virtually all Christian (and women), whose educations had not trained them to ethnic sensitivity. Nor did the military's comparatively few Jewish chaplains (who were themselves under military command) wish to make an issue of this. The Jewish Welfare Board, with assistance from women who traditionally were the kosher cooks, came to the rescue with such innovations as a "do-it-yourself seder kit." Moore said that in some military units, the theologically

prescribed food and wine in the kit brought comfort and even re-connection for lapsed Jews, as Passover went from "an intimate home ritual into a public performance."

Countless Jews, of course, could not practice traditional home rituals during the war, and throughout the nation, Jewish women made exceptional efforts to invite these travelers into their own homes. Because training camps were disproportionately in the South and remote from big cities, this put a special and significant obligation on the tiny number of Jewish women who might happen to live near Neosho, Missouri, or Starke, Florida, or other similarly isolated towns. This would be burdensome even without the food shortage that prevailed in World War II, and doubtless many women made significant sacrifices to give rationed coffee and sugar to strangers.

The military's indifference to religious difference also prevailed in the civilian food-rationing system. As it turned out, though, with the exception of hospitality to visiting Jews, Jewish cooks did not especially suffer from this indifference because their traditional diet happened to feature many meal fundamentals that were not rationed. Purchasing pork required a ration coupon, for example, but fish and poultry were unrationed. The butter that most Americans used required a coupon, but many Jewish women routinely used olive oil, goose fat, and other butter substitutes. Sour cream and yogurt, too, then were dairy products eaten almost entirely by ethnic minorities and not yet part of the mainstream American diet. Wine and other alcohol, typically part of their European habits, also were unrationed.

Clothing—an industry in which Jewish women often worked—was rationed, and many found themselves sewing uniforms instead of dresses. Silk stockings became almost impossible to obtain after the war began, and according to Moore, Jewish women in New York quickly joined the publicity campaign to prevent hoarding, using a song that proclaimed "if you'll be in style, wear stockings of lisle," or cotton. Because of their prevalence in the garment industry, Jews did have significant influence on the era's fabric-saving fashions.

Among the influential Jewish women who had begun their careers in this industry were Dorothy Jacobs Bellanca, Rose Schneiderman, and Belle Moskowitz. They and other garment workers had been born in Europe and understood the reality of pogroms; by World War II, they were friends of First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, whose husband appointed them to commissions on labor issues. Other Jewish women became Democratic Party leaders in this era, as that party was much more internationalist than the Republicans, some of whom not only were isolationists, but also barely hid their anti-Semitism.

That divide would increase in the postwar world, especially with the notorious 1953 execution of alleged spy Ethel Rosenberg. In the same postwar era, Roosevelt and her friend Lorena Hickok praised Vicky Levine, who "threw herself into a one-woman battle against indifference and hostility towards the United Nations." At the same time, the infamy surrounding Ethel Rosenberg probably damaged the career of



Anna Rosenberg, the highest-ranked woman with the Department of Defense. During the war, dedicated Jewish-American women such as Erica Glaser joined the dangerous work of the Office of Strategic Services, the nation's first espionage agency. That work by its nature meant no publicity, as did the work of female scientists, including Jewish-American women who worked on the Manhattan Project that built the atomic bomb.

In contrast to these secret and obscure careers, the era's most visible Jewish-American women might have been California Congresswoman Florence Kahn. Others ranked high in journalism and publishing. Freda Kirchway was the publisher of the influential news journal, *The Nation*, while Dorothy Schiff held that position at the *New York Post*. Blanche Knopf, who with her husband Alfred headed the famous publishing house named for them, worked much harder than he to help Jewish writers escape from Nazis. When the war ended, scholar Lucy Dawidowicz became one of its most important interpreters.

Jewish-American women also volunteered for the new female military units, especially the Women's Army Corps (WAC), but unlike African Americans, the WAC kept no records of Jewish women as a group. About 550,000 of some 3,800,000 Jewish Americans served in the military as a whole: that 15 percent is higher than the national average of about 10 percent. Female Jewish military personnel were a minority within a minority, as the experience of Bernice Sains Freid, who served in the Navy's WAVES, demonstrates. Like most others, she felt well integrated into the military, but still had moments of striking isolation and loneliness. According to letters collectors Litoff and Smith, she wrote to a friend in her home town of St. Paul, Minnesota:

I love it here in Oklahoma. I'm on a campus, and I feel like I'm in college ...

Something happened that I wouldn't dare tell my parents ... It was Friday night ... I was the only Jew on the campus ... I decided to go to Oklahoma City, where I certainly would find Jewish people ...

[At] the USO I ... walked in like a person dying of thirst. Luckily, to my left was a huge blue banner with the yellow letters J.W.B. [Jewish Welfare Board] ... There on the bench was the homeliest skinnest little sailor I had ever seen. At any other time I would have ignored him, but he was Jewish, and at that moment, that was all that mattered ...

Then the J.W.B. man in charge came in. I asked him if there were other Jewish service personnel in the area. I'll never forget his reply, "There are 30–40 Jewish men at Ft. Norman, Okla., but you're the ONLY JEWISH SERVICE-WOMAN we've ever seen."

... Every Sat. night a Jewish family entertains us at their home. Of course I attend with fellows. We sing songs around their piano ...

I'll be sorry to leave Stillwater ... We've been asked to select billets for duty assignments. I pray I'll get San Francisco ... I don't dare take a chance on being the only Jewish person in a place again.

Such experiences were not uncommon—which also meant

that millions of Christians were interacting with Jews for the first time. The war ultimately empowered American Jews by erasing prejudices. When parochial Americans actually met Jews and came to know them as individuals instead of stereotypes, a great divide was bridged. This continued after the war, as more than most veterans, Jewish Americans took advantage of the GI Bill. Its benefits brought additional assimilation on college campuses, as well as loans for new, non-ghetto homes. Within a generation, the greatest concern of Jewish organizations would not be response to bias and exclusion, but instead the younger generation's retention of its heritage.

**See also:** African-American women; Chinese-American women; colleges; conservation; dieticians; draft; enemy aliens; food shortages; GI Bill; Glaser, Erica; hoarding; Japanese-American women; Kahn, Florence; Kirchway, Freda; letter writing; Manhattan Project; marriage; occupied Germany; Office of War Information; postwar; rationing; refugees; Roosevelt, Eleanor; Rosenberg, Anna; United Nations; USO; veterans; WAVES; Women's Army Corps

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## JURY DUTY

A frequently forgotten facet of American life during the 1940s is that women in most states had won the right to vote just two decades earlier—and many, especially older women and politically conservative women, never adopted the habit of participating in civic life. Beyond that, the 1920 amendment

to the U.S. Constitution that assured the vote dealt only with that topic, and most states still limited the civil rights of women in other areas. Jury duty was one such area: especially in the South, where “states’ rights” philosophy was strongest, women did not serve as jurors.

The wartime rise in the status of women did not put an end to this particular discrimination: in 1961, two decades after U.S. entrance into World War II, three states—Alabama, Mississippi, and South Carolina—still barred female jurors completely. Eighteen other states had versions of automatic exemption, which meant that women were excluded from lists of potential jurors unless they individually took the initiative of going to their local courtroom and signing up for the jury pool. With eighteen automatic-exemption states and three states having outright bans, this meant that twenty-one states—or almost half—severely limited the presence of women in the courtroom.

Sponsors of such state laws rarely cast their arguments as discriminatory; instead, they proclaimed their desire to protect women from an onerous public service that took them from their home-centered duties. Many legislators added their belief that listening to testimony on crimes, especially rape and incest, would be unseemly for women. Less often, lawmakers argued that women would be too soft on criminals; occasionally, one would say outright what most were thinking—that they did not want African-American women on juries, especially in cases with African-American defendants. This exclusion of women from jury duty continued through the war, despite the fact that millions of men were no longer available to serve. The conservative attitudes of the legal system seems clear in that women replaced men as everything from aviator to zoologist during the war, but not as jurors.

The Supreme Court’s willingness to prioritize states’ rights over individual rights was one of the reasons why some feminists believed the Constitution needed to be again addressed with the addition of an Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). Other feminists, however, refused to support the ERA because it would nullify protective labor laws for women, for which they had campaigned in many difficult crusades with state legislatures. This division grew after the ERA was first drafted in 1923, and it remained stuck in congressional committees for decades. Nor did most congresswomen of the wartime era support it. Some, especially Mary T. Norton and Edith Nourse Rogers, were powerful enough that their leadership would have mattered, but they had other priorities.

After the war, with the growth of the civil rights movement for African Americans and then the women’s movement, the Supreme Court finally acted. It upheld Florida’s automatic-exemption law in 1961, but reversed itself only little more than a decade later, in 1975. In *Taylor vs. Louisiana*, the court ruled that laws hampering the full participation of women on juries were a violation of the Constitution’s Sixth Amendment, which assures defendants of fair trials. Using

logic that could have been used much earlier, the (still all-male) justices reasoned that trials in which decisions on guilt or innocence were likely to be made solely by men was a situation that was axiomatically discriminatory. A female defendant was expected to believe that an all-male jury was a trial by her peers.

The same was true for other women in the courtroom, including witnesses and victims of crimes, again especially rape. All-male juries also inhibited female attorneys and other women, especially judges, who were trying to rise in the legal profession. The ultimate effect was that judicial systems and state bar associations were indifferent and even hostile towards women, particularly women who wanted to practice law. One result was a shortage of qualified attorneys during World War II, especially in the family law and divorce cases—areas that increased because of wartime stress on personal relationships. The wartime military, too, wanted more lawyers than it could get.

Back in 1920, when the 19th Amendment that granted the vote was adopted, it briefly seemed as though women would take the full route to judicial equality. Florence Allen, for example, won a seat on the Ohio Supreme Court in 1922, the first election in which that was possible. Her victory was a direct result of the network that led to the vote for women—but as the League of Women Voters replaced the old suffrage organizations, earlier feminist goals were not maintained. The Business & Professional Women’s Clubs were more supportive, but most women who entered the legal profession in the 1920s and 1930s struggled largely alone. When the war absorbed public attention in the 1940s, jury fairness and other feminist issues were forgotten for another generation. It was not the daughters, but the granddaughters of suffragists who won this particular victory. The women of the generation between were free to lay down their lives for their country, as many did, but not to serve on juries in every state.

*See also:* **Business & Professional Women’s Club; Equal Rights Amendment; fatalities; lawyers; League of Women Voters; males, comparisons with**

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## **KAHN, REP. FLORENCE PRAG (1866–1948)**

The first Jewish woman in Congress, U.S. Representative Florence Kahn of San Francisco had lost her seat by World War II, but her earlier congressional work nonetheless proved important to winning the war.

As Florence Prag, she graduated from the University of California at Berkeley in 1887. She taught school, and as a result, later would sponsor legislation to guarantee teachers' pensions. She also became a life-long member of the American Association of University Women, which provided networking in an era when very few women were university graduates. After Jewish women formed Hadassah in 1912, she added it to her organizational priorities.

Florence Prag married attorney Julius Kahn in 1899, and they successfully campaigned for Congress while newlyweds. Neither came from wealthy families, and despite bearing children, Florence Kahn often worked in her husband's Washington, D.C., office. Popular and known for her quick wit, she took over an increasing amount of his load during the illness that caused his 1925 death.

Although California women won the vote in 1911, none had been elected to Congress; the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution that assured all women of the vote had passed in 1920, just five years before Julius Kahn died. Florence Kahn thus became one of the first beneficiaries of the new political attitudes that the amendment introduced. Unlike several other widows of that era who followed their husbands into office, she went on to establish a strong independent identity. She won not only the 1925 special election to replace her husband, but also five more elections. This was a particularly stellar achievement in view of the fact that she had to spend most of her time in Washington and

yet had to defeat California-based challengers—in an era before airplane travel was routine.

A liberal Republican in a period when Republicans dominated Washington, Kahn represented her district well, especially after her male colleagues assigned her to two of the House's most powerful committees, Military Affairs and Appropriations. She was the first woman to serve on these prestigious committees, and she used her influence to bring huge military facilities to San Francisco, including both naval installations and new air bases. This made her popular enough that she stayed in office through most of the Great Depression, despite her Republican affiliation. She finally lost at age seventy, in the 1936 Democratic landslide that reelected President Franklin D. Roosevelt. Despite their differing political parties, Eleanor Roosevelt respected Kahn's abilities and frequently invited her to the White House.

The United States entered World War II just five years after Representative Kahn lost her election, and the San Francisco military posts that were established because of her legislative initiative would prove vital to victory. She died of heart disease three years after the war's end.

*See also:* **aircraft workers; Jewish-American women; Roosevelt, Eleanor; shipbuilding; teachers**

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### KENT, HELEN GREENE (1921–1945)

Helen G. Kent was one of the 186 members of the Women's Army Corps who died while in the service of her country, but she was in the news more than most. On October 22, 1943, Private Kent, a native of Butte, Montana, was the center of attention at the WAC School of Army Administration in Conway, Arkansas. Military officials traveled there to present her with the Distinguished Flying Cross and other medals owed to her husband, First Lieutenant Earl C. Kent, who then was missing in action in Europe. A veteran pilot in bombing raids, he later was declared dead. Her records of this time are preserved at the University of Central Arkansas.

Earl Kent had served in both the Middle East and the European Theater of Operations, and Helen Kent went on to the Pacific Theater. She had risen to sergeant by May 13, 1945, when she also was killed in the line of duty. She was on a plane bound for Australia when it crashed into a New Guinea ravine, killing all but three of the twenty-four passengers. Her body, along with those of the others, including seven women, lay in a makeshift grave there until 1958, when the plane wreckage was rediscovered. Like them, she was interned at the Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery in St. Louis, Missouri.

*See also:* **decorations; fatalities; European Theater of Operations; Pacific Theater of Operations; Women's Army Corps**

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## KEYPUNCH OPERATORS

While most women pounded non-electric typewriters during World War II, some were pioneer keypunch operators. These early electronic data processors were similar to today's computers in that one worked at a keyboard, which remained rather similar to that of a typewriter. The work called for typing ability that combined speed with accuracy, something that many female high-school graduates were assumed to have in the 1940s—but a skill that their mothers likely had not acquired. In this sense, keypunch machines created a new job opportunity for women.

About three times as large as the average typewriter, the machines literally punched holes in heavy paper or cardboard.



Keypunch machine operators kept track of detailed contracts with Britain in the office of Lend-Lease. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

Usually the paper was in the form of a long tape, similar to that produced by an adding machine, except that often it was perforated so that the tape could be separated into more manageable cards of about six inches. Those punched-out data bits then were run through a second part of the machine that counted the meaningfully-placed holes and thereby collected the encoded information.

Unlike women who worked in cryptography, most keypunch operators were civilians. Cryptology, or the encoding of messages to prevent the enemy from "overhearing" military plans, was much more skilled and demanded much more secrecy. Cryptologists usually were members of the Women's Army Corps (WAC), while most keypunch operators were young civilians hired primarily for their typing skills. Part of the group known as "government girls," most had passed the civil service examinations elsewhere and were trained as keypunch operators after moving to Washington.

Another decade or more would pass after the war's end before the machines were widely introduced in private businesses. The company now known as IBM, however, played such a key role in their development that some publications, including that of the Business & Professional Women (BPW), referred to keypunch machines as "International Business Machines." For their private-enterprise members, however, routine keypunch operation remained futuristic. Instead, keypunch operators were likely to be employed by federal agencies that needed massive record keeping of information that was not generally considered secret.

One office in which they were widely employed, for example, carried out the 1941 Lend-Lease Act, which passed nine months prior to U.S. entrance into the war. Congress appropriated an initial \$7 billion that primarily benefited Great Britain with the loan or lease of war materiel. Women who operated keypunch machines for Lend-Lease therefore spent their days recording the details of when, where, and what materiel had been requested and shipped under this huge appropriation. Jeeps alone, for instance, would need

records of model numbers, age, and condition, as well as the time and place of shipment from which American port to which British port.

Mattie Treadwell, one of the WAC's founding officers, apparently did not know the term for keypunch machines when she wrote:

In 1944 another shortage developed, that of skilled operators of business machines for AAF's [Army Air Force] statistical control units ... The need eventually became such that priority...was given for 1,000 Wacs ... Since few women skilled in this work could be recruited, women with suitable intelligence and aptitude were chosen and sent to a six-week intensive training course at Orlando, Florida. Women proved especially apt at the work, although many complaints were received concerning its monotony.

Other than the monotonous tedium of creating accurate records—often in obscure military/industrial jargon—perhaps the biggest enemy of these machines was humidity. Orlando, in fact, was a terrible choice of location, and even Washington summers in an era prior to air conditioning caused problems for keypunch operators. If the cards were too damp, they would stick together or misalign or curl up and jam the machine. A second unpleasantness was their bulk: because every Washington building was crowded, operators had to work as closely as possible to each other, and with the noise produced by the constant punching, the office could feel claustrophobic.

On the other hand, the occupation gave these women—almost all of whom were young—a sense of being in on the ground floor of something new and very important. They were not nearly at the level of the Navy's Dr. Grace Hopper and other pioneering computer scientists, but they shared a glimpse of the future and did work that was almost incomprehensible back in their hometowns.

**See also: Business & Professional Women's Club; cryptography; electronics industry; "government girls"; Hopper, Grace; scientific research and development; Women's Army Corps**

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### KIRCHWEY, FRED A (1893–1976)

As publisher of *The Nation* before, during, and after World War II, Freda Kirchwey molded the opinions of national opinion-makers.

Born in Lake Placid, New York, to educated parents, she graduated from New York City's Barnard College in 1915 and worked for two periodicals before joining *The Nation* in 1919, the year after World War I ended. Her first job there, she later told *Current Biography*, "carried with it little pay" and "meant that she was permitted to clip the newspapers, but not to read them." *The Nation's* venerable chief, Oswald Garrison Villard, however, soon saw her abilities. The grandson of William Lloyd Garrison, the nineteenth century's great anti-slavery crusader, Villard recognized that this young woman had a passion for justice. He promoted her to international news editor and, in 1922, managing editor. Just seven years after graduation, she held a powerful position of influence with intellectually elite readers.

As the United States became more conservative in this postwar period, *The Nation* courageously spoke out on behalf of immigrants, African Americans, and others omitted from the presumed prosperity of the Roaring Twenties. Although it was primarily a political journal, Kirchwey nonetheless used her position as managing editor to note the tremendous social change among the era's flappers—something that occurred in all economic classes, with the greatest amount of social liberalism frequently displaying itself among women who nonetheless labeled themselves politically conservative. Kirchwey most notably moved beyond the usual boundaries when she published a series of anonymous articles by prominent women about their personal sexual experiences. The compilation was issued as a book, *Our Changing Morality* (1925).

The 1932 landslide election of Franklin D. Roosevelt meant that the government adopted many of the reforms that *The Nation* had urged before Wall Street crashed into the Great Depression. Kirchwey's economic opinions had proven correct, and this brought even more influence among intellectuals and government policymakers. She supported Roosevelt's New Deal reforms, but, predictably, her views again were more prescient than his, especially in foreign policy. Like Sigrid Schultz, Dorothy Thompson, and a few other female commentators, Kirchwey foresaw the dangers of rising right-wingers. Articles regularly informed readers not only of European fascism, but also Japan's aggression against China. She vainly argued for changes in immigration law so that Jewish refugees from Hitler could find a safe haven.

Kirchwey could easily adhere to her liberal editorial stance as long as *The Nation* was owned by Villard—but in 1935, he sold it to an investment banker. The next two years were difficult, but when the new owner found that he could not persuade the editor to modify her leftist views—and realized that most of the magazine's audience subscribed because of her—he became frustrated enough to allow her to buy him out. She became, in the words of *Current Biography*, "the only woman owner of a national magazine" in 1937.

Famed commentator H.L. Mencken dismissed Kirchwey

as “another wild woman,” but it was her editorial vision that became national reality, not his. *The Nation* successfully urged retention of the economic reforms of the 1930s, something that was not necessarily a given in the 1940s. It would have been easy, for example, to say that the United States could not afford its new Social Security program in the context of the most expensive war in history—but because of the influence that she and other liberals had with the White House and Congress, repeal of those reforms was never seriously considered.

She supported the League of Nations and its successor, the United Nations, and in 1942, proclaimed that *The Nation* would be strongly internationalist as long as she owned it. She also passionately spoke out on behalf of those trying to escape from European fascism, but were not assisted by Americans. Author Haskell Lookstein quoted an early 1943 editorial that shines with Kirchwey’s brilliant writing:

In this country, you and I, the President and the Congress and the State Department are accessories to the crime and share Hitler’s guilt. If we had behaved like humane and generous people instead of complacent and cowardly ones, the two million lying today in the earth of Poland ... would be alive and safe. We had it in our power to rescue this doomed people and yet we did not lift a hand to do it—or perhaps it would be better to say that we lifted just one cautious hand, encased in a tight-fitting glove of quotas and visas and affidavits and a thick layer of prejudice.

Nor, in her view, were all the potential fascists overseas: again already in 1942, Kirchwey dubbed the ultra-conservative, isolationist Representative Martin Dies of Texas “an absolutely consistent exemplification of American Fascism.” When Dies and other right wingers dominated Congress in the postwar years, Kirchwey could expect trouble, but she did not retire until the chief persecutor, Senator Joseph McCarthy of Wisconsin, was censured by the Senate—partly because of courageous action by his fellow Republican, Margaret Chase Smith of Maine. Finally vindicated, Kirchwey retired in 1955, having been the voice of *The Nation* for almost four decades.

Freda Kirchwey kept her personal life quite separate from her public persona, but she had married a few months after her 1915 college graduation. Her husband, Evans Clark, managed a charitable trust, the Twentieth Century Fund, during World War II. They had three sons, but tragically, lost two in early childhood. The strength of her political conviction can be seen in the fact that she supported her sole remaining child when he left Harvard to volunteer as an ambulance driver in Britain. He did this dangerous work before the United States entered the war, during the “blitz,” when Hitler’s planes bombed English civilians almost nightly.

After retirement, Kirchwey lived in Switzerland. She died in a Florida nursing home at age eighty-two.

**See also:** British women; correspondents, war; Jewish-American women; magazines; refugees; Smith, Margaret Chase; Thompson, Dorothy; United Nations

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## KIRKPATRICK, HELEN (1909–1997)

Perhaps the most widely respected female war correspondent, Helen Kirkpatrick headed the *Chicago Daily News*’ bureaus in both London and Paris. She also left her desk to personally report on many battles in the European Theater of Operations (ETO).

Born in Rochester, New York, and educated at Smith College and then at the University of Geneva, Kirkpatrick brought a solid grounding in European history and languages to her job. It initially was hard to get a job, however, because she returned to New York in 1932, the nadir of the Great Depression. After disappointment in both work and a brief marriage, she went back to Switzerland in 1935 as an intern for the Foreign Policy Association—which again gave her excellent intellectual background and international contacts, but little career reward.

Finally, after two more newspaper jobs underutilized her abilities in London, Kirkpatrick successfully sought backing from two British journalists to begin their own foreign-policy newsletter, the *Whitehall News*. With the two men working part-time and she full-time, they soon developed a small but elite audience, including Winston Churchill, the king of Sweden, and others who heeded the message that the three journalists tried to deliver, but which much of the world did not want to hear: that European fascists were dangerous.

Kirkpatrick reinforced that message with *This Terrible Peace* (1939), a criticism of the Munich Pact that British Prime Minister Neville Chamberlain and Germany’s Adolf Hitler signed in September, 1938. According to author Julia Edwards, Chamberlain was so angry with Kirkpatrick that he “managed to ban the sale of the book at railroad kiosks.” Within a year, however, Kirkpatrick’s predictions proved correct: Hitler’s aggression continued; the two nations went to war; and Chamberlain went into disgrace.

The *Whitehall News* had achieved its purpose and the *Chicago Daily News*’ London bureau chief seized the opportunity to hire Kirkpatrick. He soon left for the front in Finland, leaving her in charge. The first story she filed again drew initial scorn from male colleagues: she proposed to interview the Duke of Windsor (Britain’s abdicated king), who famously did not give interviews. She knew a friend of a friend, however, and soon was sitting in Windsor’s Paris



home. He kept his vow and she published her story—with the interesting solution being that the Duke interviewed the young woman.

While the United States remained neutral and Britain endured months of steady bombing, she wrote *Under the British Umbrella* (1940). On a trip to Chicago to promote it, she was surprised to hear her newspaper's chief declare, according to Edwards, that "we don't have women on the staff." He made an exception for her, however, and she returned to Europe—via Iceland, where German submarines attacked her ship convoy. CBS Radio broadcaster Edward R. Murrow, famous for his coverage of London during the blitz, tried to hire Kirkpatrick during this period, but according to author Lilya Wagner, was told "no more women" by his New York bosses. Mary Marvin Breckinridge and Helen Hiatt were enough, they thought, and so Murrow hired Charles Collingwood, who had "only a year's experience and nothing like Kirkpatrick's stature."

After France fell to the Nazis in June 1940, Kirkpatrick increasingly associated herself with the Free French Forces exiled in Britain, a tactic that sometimes enabled her to ignore censorship rules. She continued to travel with the French even after the United States entered the war and began its first front in North Africa, thereby avoiding the hostility that other female correspondents encountered with the American press office in Algiers. Kirkpatrick also was with Frenchmen when she came under fire in Corsica in 1943; in fact, she spent most of that year in the Mediterranean front, including hospitalization after exposure to tropical disease on Malta.

She returned to London in 1944, where she was included in press decision making on the coverage of the D-Day invasion that eventually liberated Europe from Nazi control. German attacks on England had resumed, this time with pioneer guided missiles called "buzz bombs." Like other women, she wanted to cover D-Day, and used the buzz bombs as an excuse. Author Edwards says that Kirkpatrick told ETO commander Dwight D. Eisenhower "it is too damned dangerous here. I want to go to France." With additional pressure from her French friends, who made an official request for her presence, she was the first correspondent assigned to the Free French headquarters.

She thus was one of the first American civilians to enter Paris after the Germans surrendered—and again came under fire, when French fascists tried to assassinate Free French leaders, including future prime minister Charles de Gaulle. Author Nancy Sorel quotes Kirkpatrick's story of a thanksgiving service scheduled at the ancient cathedral of Notre Dame within hours of the liberation:

The generals' car arrived ... We stood at salute and at that very moment a revolver shot rang out ... A machine gun opened up ... [and] sprayed the pavement at my feet ...

I found myself in the main aisle, a few feet behind the generals ... Suddenly an automatic opened up from behind us—it came from behind the pipes of Notre Dame's organ. Other shots rang out ... For one flashing instant it seemed

that a great massacre was about to take place ... Spontaneously, a crowd of widows and bereaved burst forth into the *Te Deum* ... I could only stand amazed at the coolness, imperturbability and apparent unconcern of French generals and civilians alike ... I fell in behind them and watched them walk deliberately out ... A machine gun was still blazing from a nearby roof, and one could hear shooting all along the Seine.

She then headed the *News*' Paris bureau, but also reported from the field as the Allies moved east towards Berlin. A big, strong woman, she excelled at jeep driving, and according to colleague Margaret Bourke-White of *Life* magazine, often left the press convoy in a cloud of dust while she displayed her gear-shifting abilities to climb impossible hills. As the Nazis collapsed, Kirkpatrick was one of the first to enter Frankfurt, as well as Hitler's mountainous Bavarian retreat, Berchtesgaden. Like other reporters, she struggled with ambivalent feelings towards Germans, now starving amid destruction, but nonetheless responsible for supporting so evil a government.

After victory, she covered the Nuremberg war crimes trials and went to the Soviet Union to explore the situation with that erstwhile member of the Allies. She was in Moscow when her bosses cabled her to come "home" to Chicago and report local news. Understandably angry, she resigned. Dorothy Schiff, publisher of the *New York Post*, quickly offered Kirkpatrick a contract as a roving correspondent, including Asia. Among the stories she covered during the remainder of the 1940s were the postwar struggles of India and Pakistan for independence from Britain.

After 1951, she worked for the State Department in Paris, helping to implement the hugely important Marshall Plan for rebuilding Europe. She married Robbins Milbank in 1954, and thereafter lived in the United States, with homes on both coasts. After her husband died, she settled in Williamsburg, Virginia, where she kept in touch with Washington news people until her death at age eighty-eight.

Among other awards, the French bestowed their prestigious Medal of Honor on Helen Kirkpatrick, while the United States granted her its Medal of Freedom.

**See also:** Breckinridge, Mary Marvin; Bourke-White, Margaret; censorship; correspondents, war; D-Day; decorations, military; European Theater of Operations; Hiatt, Helen; North Africa; occupied Germany; under-utilization

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## KITCHEN POLICE

“Kitchen police,” or “KP,” appears to have entered the language in the late nineteenth century with Lord Robert Baden-Powell, founder of the Boy Scouts. (In England, the associated group for girls was the “Girl Guides,” but Juliette Gordon Low chose “Girl Scouts” soon after founding America’s first troop in Savannah in 1912.) By World War II, however, “kitchen police” was rarely used in Scouting nomenclature; instead, it was a military term, used as official terminology by the War Department, as well as in comic-book slang.

Baden-Powell had intended it to mean cleaning—or, as a verb, “policing”—a cooking site, but in the military, it quickly evolved beyond that. Not only were the kitchens literal ones instead of camping stoves, but the meaning of “police” also changed. As a verb, it continued to refer to cleaning, as for example, “the sergeant ordered us to police up the barracks.” As a noun, “kitchen police” meant assignment to duty in a mess hall. Most of this work was dishwashing, floor mopping, and other forms of cleaning, but KP also could mean other menial tasks, including the infamous potato peeling.

By the time that the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) was established in 1942, KP was a well-established military concept. Officers and NCOs (non-commissioned officers) were exempt from the duty—and because all members of the longtime Army Nurse Corps were officers, these women never performed KP. The WAAC (later WAC) followed that model, with officers exempt but enlisted women, like enlisted men, subject to this occasional duty in addition to their regular assignment, or Military Occupational Speciality (MOS). KP never was an MOS, as no one was assigned to this work permanently. Cooks, bakers, and other food-related service workers had those assignments as their MOS: they attended speciality schools to learn the necessary skills and never performed KP. Instead, they supervised the unfortunates with other MOS categories who found their names on the weekly duty roster for KP.

The original intention of many men was that the new non-nurse enlisted women would be on KP eternally, or at least doing “women’s work” in kitchens and laundries. Even the leadership of Army Air Corps, who generally were the military’s most progressive men, persistently recommended that WACs take over all mess-hall duty. It is to the great credit of WAC Director Oveta Culp Hobby and her congressional supporters, especially Representative Edith Nourse Rogers, that this did not happen. They successfully argued that these new women were analogous to the Nurse Corps of both the Army and the Navy: they had been recruited to perform the job for which they were best suited, and few qualified women would volunteer if the prospect of endless days in kitchens loomed large. When the Navy’s WAVES followed the WAC

into existence, it also found that the possibility of KP was a real deterrent for recruiters; even more than the WAC, the WAVES tried to minimize the amount of time assigned.

Although the media often portrayed KP being used as punishment for misdeeds, this was contrary to official policy. Many commanders routinely violated that policy in the traditional military, but this was much less true in the women’s military units: only rarely do records show KP being used as punishment. On the other hand, this may be simply another case of women—because they were volunteers and not drafted—rarely being guilty of misdeeds and therefore not assigned to KP as punishment. It is also true that the Military Police unit initially planned for the WAC never was created because there was insufficient misbehavior. (Military Police, by the way, is a professional corps with its own MOS slots; there is no connection whatever between KP and MP.)

Although the amount of time assigned to KP varied, every enlisted WAC made her acquaintance with it. Jane Pollack had been at Fort Des Moines, the first WAAC camp, for several months before her turn came. Then she found it to be not at all the joke portrayed in cartoons, but a painful, exhausting experience. She peeled potatoes and did other chores, including washing twelve hundred plates. “The water was literally boiling,” she wrote, “and my fingers and knuckles are so sore that I can hardly hold my pen ... My mind is still clouded with steam.” Indeed, prior to air conditioning, the temperature in summer kitchens easily could run over a hundred degrees. Grace Porter Miller was fortunate to have the duty in winter, but she was assigned to KP much more often than Pollack. Miller wrote:

Those unlucky enough to be put on KP for the day were roused out of bed an hour before everyone else .... KP was pure misery, and everyone had a turn at least once a week. Huge pots and pans, some of them big enough to crawl into, had to be scrubbed ... The grease traps on the immense stoves had to be emptied ... [and] the smell was nauseating ...

Tables had to be washed and hundreds of smelly ashtrays emptied [with] the sickening smell of wet cigarettes ... Benches had to be upturned on top of the tables so the rough floors could be swept and mopped with big, heavy rag mops ... All this had to be done under constant, nagging, abusive supervision by the cooks ... Anyone who objected or grumbled pulled extra days of KP, so we worked in silence ... By the end of twelve hours, the poor KP recruit was exhausted.

Occasional commanders objected to KP, arguing that their file clerk or motor pool driver or air traffic controller was needed at her post and should not have to leave her position vacant for a day while she worked in a kitchen. Military tradition is hard to change, however, and although that was not its purpose, KP served as a great equalizer. Some women even found it to be a sort of unconscious diversity training that helped them better identify with service workers in the future. WAC Margaret Flint used the time to get to know other women: while scraping or stacking dishes, she had conversations that never would have occurred in the class-

room or on the parade ground. Like other young women from sheltered backgrounds, she discovered older women who had a variety of careers and who nonetheless were enlisted women doing KP as she was. Among those she mentioned were a former judge and “a colored dental surgeon of many years’ experience.”

The duty also allowed even a raw recruit still in basic training to exercise a little power. Vera Clay, a *Newsweek* reporter who joined the army incognito for a week, discovered this the hard way:

After mess, I elbowed my way to the door, where three oversized garbage cans stood. Carefully, I dumped liquids into one can, the solids into another, and stray papers into a third ... and was happily exiting when one of the KP ... detail called me back. I had thrown some of the solids into the liquids. Penalty: I had to dish it out by hand.

**See also:** **Army Nurse Corps; cigarettes; Des Moines, Fort; draft; Hobby, Oveta Culp; Military Occupational Specialty; recruiting; Rogers, Edith Nourse; WAVES; Women’s Army Corps**

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#### KNOPF, BLANCHE WOLF (1894–1966)

One of the most influential women of her age, book publisher Blanche Knopf saw the threat of fascism earlier than most and brought writers to the United States who otherwise might not have gotten out of Hitler’s Europe. Other women were successful newspaper publishers during World War II, but she was singular in the book industry.

Blanche Wolf was born to a wealthy Jewish family in New York City during the Victorian age and learned to speak both German and French at home. That cultural climate, however, also meant that she did not go to college. Instead, she married Alfred Knopf, a family friend of similar background in 1916, and with capital from both of their families they built the Knopf publishing enterprise—but its official name was “Alfred A. Knopf.” After bearing one child, also named Alfred, she worked as a literary businesswoman all of her life. The era’s press, however, consistently called her “Mrs. Alfred A. Knopf.”

She assumed the corporate title of vice president in 1921, a perfect time for a woman of her perception. The Roaring Twenties brought social change at a rate unprecedented in

the history of the world, and Blanche Knopf pursued authors who reflected that and who would appeal to the era’s “new woman.” She traveled extensively to meet with promising writers and entertained her authors lavishly to ensure their loyalty to Knopf. Famed H.L. Mencken’s records, for example, are replete with stories of weekends at the Knopf country estate—and the city lunches he mentions were much more likely to have been with Blanche than with Alfred. In her mind, however, Mencken probably was more a business contact than a friend: he not only was a political conservative, he also adored everything German. He did not see, as she did, the dangers of the rising right.

She looked beyond that narrow view and already on July 14, 1936, said in an interview with the *New York Times* that “there is not a German writer left in Germany who is worth thinking about.” She went on to correctly predict that gifted writers and enterprising publishers would not be able to function as the ultra-conservatives took over Europe. This uncommon ability to see the future led her to such profitable acquisitions as William L. Shirer’s *Berlin Diary* (1941). Published several months before the United States entered World War II, that non-fiction book alone earned the publishing house \$1.5 million in its first year.

Although the majority of her authors were men, including Freud, Camus, Sartre, and Khalil Gibran, she also promoted the careers of American women such as Willa Cather, Fannie Hurst, and non-fiction writer Anne O’Hare McCormick, a Pulitzer Prize winner. Abroad, Knopf recruited two Nobel Prize winners, Norway’s Sigrid Undset and France’s Simone de Beauvoir. When the Nazis took over Norway early in 1940, Undset escaped to neutral Sweden and eventually the United States; Beauvoir evaded Gestapo attention despite her leftism—but the situation was such that Knopf never knew if they and others were alive or dead.

She did manage to go to London at the height of the war and wrote in *Publisher’s Weekly* that despite shortages of workers and paper, the British were so committed to reading that its publishers were fine. She added, in fact, that “there is a healthy active, exciting, creative spirit in England today such as I have not seen there in fifteen years.” But travel on the Continent or in Asia was impossible during the war, and Blanche Knopf again demonstrated her creativity by developing Latin American literature. She also reached out to African Americans, publishing the radical Langston Hughes. Her tolerance of differing opinion is well demonstrated by the range of views among these authors: not everyone could get along with both a Mencken and a de Beauvoir.

The Knopf firm also set publishing standards in design quality, advertising, and promotion—and Blanche Knopf played close attention to her authors’ views of how best to sell their books. It was her uncanny ability to foresee future trends and readers’ interests, however, that made the company such a success. It enjoyed multimillion dollar annual sales, with several best sellers of over one million copies, as well as a dozen Nobel Prize winners.

But business success and marital success have different



requirements, and the Knopfs' marriage deteriorated to the point that they barely were civil to each other. Part of the problem doubtless was that the business side of publishing is always slow to adopt to the changes that are vital on the editorial side, and thus Blanche Knopf often was excluded from functions that Alfred could attend because he was male. She doubtless resented the "Alfred A." portion of the corporate name, as well as her gender-based secondary role. According to *Current Biography*, she once expressed her bitterness at these limitations by refusing an invitation to speak on the future of women in publishing: her reply said that "there is no future worth mentioning."

The year she said that, 1957, was the same in which, after almost four decades as vice president, she became president—when Alfred elevated himself to chairman of the board. Their son, apparently tired of endless family battles, left Knopf to found another company in 1959, and unable to turn over their empire to him, the couple sold Knopf to Random House the following year. After just six years of retirement, Blanche Knopf died in her sleep.

She sought out and published some of the twentieth century's most important authors, and France recognized that with its Legion of Honor. The government of Brazil expressed its appreciation of her prescient recognition of Latin American literature by awarding her its National Order of the Southern Cross.

*See also:* **bestsellers; colleges; decorations; Jewish-American women; refugees; travel**

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### KUHN, IRENE CORBALLY (1900–1995)

A longtime resident of Asia, Irene Kuhn was the first person—not merely the first woman—to broadcast news from China.

Radio was not yet on the scene when she began her career, but independent-minded Manhattan native Irene Corbally landed her first newspaper jobs without going to college. After briefly working for the *Syracuse Herald* and *New York Daily News* in 1919, she went to Paris in 1920 as a correspondent for the *Chicago Tribune*—complete with a new wardrobe. She convinced her bosses to pay for the clothes she thought necessary to report on the fashion shows and celebrity sightings that they assigned to her.

World War I was barely over, and the French were grate-

ful for Americans and their dollars. Soon many other avant garde members of the "Lost Generation" would emulate her in moving to Paris, but although she later wrote nostalgically of that time, the adventurous Corbally soon moved on. She and the woman who would become her lifelong friend, Peggy Hull (later Duell), sailed for Shanghai in 1921. There Corbally found a job with the *China Press*—and met Bert Kuhn, whom she would marry the next year. According to author Julia Edwards, she also accompanied birth control advocate Margaret Sanger in this period on a tour of filthy Shanghai, where the horrifying results of overpopulation were abundantly clear.

Shanghai, in fact, ranked high on any list of public health hazards, and when the Kuhns found that they would be having a child, they went to Honolulu for a safe and sanitary delivery. Tidal waves struck Hawaii while they were there, and a very pregnant Irene Kuhn earned a bonus from the International News Service (INS) for being the first to report on the catastrophe. They returned to Shanghai in 1923, as soon as their daughter could withstand exposure to its communicable diseases, and it was there that Irene Kuhn made her historic radio broadcast on December 14, 1924.

Roy DeLay, the inventive man who set up the station in China, had spent his money on equipment and asked her to go on the air "for the thrill of it." According to author Julia Edwards, the broadcast was the first time that "people living in the hinterlands" discovered their ancient monarchy had fallen in 1911. It was overthrown by democratic forces led by American-educated Dr. Sun Yet-Sen, who married Soong Ch'ing-ling, a graduate of Wesleyan Female College in Macon, Georgia. Her sister, Soong Mei-ling, also attended that college; she would marry Chiang Kai-shek and be internationally known as Madame Chiang. Fighting between followers of the two men would absorb China for decades, but during the 1930s and 1940s, that civil war was disrupted by the greater enemy of Japan.

Irene Kuhn followed this emerging political situation while writing for the *Shanghai Gazette*, a English-language paper for foreigners in China. She took a break in 1927, however, to bring her daughter to visit the United States—and while they were gone, Bert Kuhn died. Author Edwards says that "although the cause of death was not determined," he had been working with U.S. Naval Intelligence, and Irene Kuhn "believed he paid for his work with his life." Someone mailed his cremated ashes to her, and the young widow with a child to support sought another job in New York.

Her extensive experience kept Kuhn employed even when the stock market crashed, as she wrote for three of the half-dozen large newspapers that the city then had. She also made the transition to radio, first working for the Mutual Broadcasting System and then the premier National Broadcasting Company, today's NBC. At a time when few female voices graced the non-entertainment airwaves, "Irene Corbally Kuhn" became a respected sign-off signature.

Along with lesser-known reporters Edna Lee Booker, Helen Foster, and Agnes Smedley, Kuhn was back in Shang-

hai when the Japanese attacked in 1937. Her long Asian experience was such that even General “Vinegar Joe” Stilwell, who was notorious for his negativity towards women, accepted Kuhn’s right to report in the China-Burma-India war theater that he commanded. She arrived in Chungkung, deep in China’s interior and the capital of Chiang Kei-shek’s government, early in 1945, when the war in Asia was far from settled. Her personal ambition, however, was to return to coastal Shanghai and be the first to broadcast the news of victory from there—thus repeating her 1924 milestone. She did that on August 14, 1945, or the V-J Day that Americans celebrated on August 15.

Mainland Japan had been devastated since the U.S. dropped its second atomic bomb on August 9—but in Shanghai, there was little evidence that the war was over, let alone that the Allies had won. Kuhn found “the Japanese still directing traffic,” Edwards said, and the coastal, longtime cosmopolitan city seemed cut off from the world. Kuhn carried on, though, according to Edwards:

Night after night, she announced the news, ending with the message, “Please relay to San Francisco,” not knowing if anyone was listening. At last, after about two weeks, she received a telephone call. The aide to U.S. Admiral Thomas Kincaid called to report that the *USS Rocky Mount* ... was moving up the Whampoo River to dock in Shanghai harbor. The admiral, if nobody else, had picked up her newscasts.

Using the ship’s equipment after it arrived, Kuhn’s broadcasts were heard in the United States—even by her daughter,

who was living in New York and had no idea where in the vast world her mother was. Irene Corbally Kuhn went on to report the news from Okinawa and then the Philippines, where American women had spent years as prisoners of war.

In the 1950s, she wrote a syndicated column, “The Way Things Are.” The Overseas Press Club featured the wartime recollections of her NBC colleague Helen Hiatt, not Kuhn, in the book that it published in 1947—but the organization made amends for this oversight with a 1985 event in her honor, when Irene Corbally Kuhn was eighty six years old.

*See also:* **birth control; Chiang Kai-shek, Madame; Chinese-American women; correspondents, war; Hiatt, Helen; occupied Japan; Pacific Theater of Operations; prisoners of war; radio; Smedley, Agnes; V-J Day**

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## LABOR FORCE

The population of the United States has more than doubled in the more than sixty years since World War II, a fact that is important to any quantitative discussion. The 1940 census, taken in the year before the U.S. entry into the war, showed the nation to have a total population of just slightly over 130 million people. This was a historically small increase over the previous census, when the 1930 population was approximately 123 million: although they seldom acknowledged it, women clearly exercised some forms of birth control during the Great Depression of that decade. In contrast, the baby boom of the war and postwar years would create a jump to 151 million by 1950. That, in turn, would double during the second half of the century—at the same time, ironically, that individual family size declined.

During the war years, however, the typical family continued to have many more children than adults, with the result being that the number of people available to the labor force was not nearly as large as it may appear. When the equation omits children, the elderly or disabled, and the housewives/mothers whose labor in the home truly was essential, the national labor force in 1939, when the war in Europe began, was about 55 million. Of that, some 15 million would serve in the armed forces. The margin of necessary labor very much devolved on women: they became the “production soldiers” who made the difference in victory.

Between 1940 and 1944, when war materiel production reached its height, about 35 percent of the labor force was female. With more than one in every three jobs held by women, their numbers in the labor force soared from about 12 million in 1940 to about 19 million in 1944—or well over a million new women in the labor force every year. The majority were of the “Rosie the Riveter” model: they were

the women who went into non-traditional jobs, especially in the defense industries of aircraft manufacture, shipbuilding, munitions, and pioneer electronics. A 1944 survey showed that 49 percent of these women had not been in the labor force prior to the war, while another 31 percent had been students—which means that 70 percent were new wage earners. With the exception of the munitions industry, almost none had previously worked in these blue-collar jobs that traditionally were reserved for men.

Not only was this a tremendous quantitative change, but the nature of the average employed woman also transformed itself in these four years. Before the war, married women seldom worked at paid employment except in dire family circumstances; indeed, many private and public employers had official policies of refusing to hire married women. That changed with the war emergency, and according to author Penny Colman, “of the women who entered the labor force for the first time during the war, 60 per cent were over the age of 35,” while the number of working wives doubled. Beyond that, “wives of servicemen ... were three times as likely to work as wives whose husbands were not away from home.”

Employers not only held a longtime bias against married women, but also and especially older women. That particular thoughtlessness has taken even longer to overcome, but some managers immediately saw that older women were less likely to be absent and more responsible in handling their tasks. For just one example, a manager at the war’s most innovative large employer, shipbuilding Kaiser Industries, pointed out to author Susan B. Anthony II that at its shipyard in Richmond, California, “a sixty-five year old woman welder [was] breaking records in production output.” The same point was repeatedly made elsewhere, as many



employers came to understand that maturity mattered more than youthful appearance.

One of the biggest problems with recruitment of this new labor force was getting the public to understand that needs were specific, both in terms of skills and especially in terms of geography. Detroit is an excellent example. Its car factories converted to the jeeps and tanks and trucks vital for moving troops, and as men were drafted, its twenty-four-hours, seven-days-a-week production required many more women. This began already before U.S. entrance into the war, with some seventy-one thousand employed women in 1940—which grew to more than one-quarter of a million in the next two years. Detroit attracted the unemployed and underemployed from Missouri and Arkansas, but soon it and countless other boom towns were stretched to their limits.

Very little new housing could be built in the war, as both materials and labor had to be allocated to defense needs, and the result was that no more newcomers could be accommodated. Although tens of thousands of women in, for example, Vermont or Nebraska might well want to earn money and also help the war effort, there was little that they could do beyond helping to increase farm food production. Instead, labor recruitment in Detroit and similar places had to focus on women who already lived there.

Those Vermont and Nebraska women, however, might find other, non-war jobs that became newly open to them. Although defense work often was geographically specific, women replaced men in many other job categories all over the nation. Draft quotas were intended to be geographically equal, and loss of male labor affected local economies everywhere. To be sure, the Midwest had more draft-exempt men than most places, as agriculture was almost as vital to victory as war materiel. Men with highly-specific skills, such as machinists, also were exempt if they were working in essential civilian jobs—but as the war worsened, fewer and fewer men could use their jobs as an excuse with their local draft board. Women thus replaced men in positions such as bank tellers, train-ticket sellers, taxi and bus drivers, and even department-store Santas. Again, many of these changes would be permanent, as business discovered that women could do these jobs as well—and perhaps more cheaply—than men.

Federal agencies from the Office of War Information to the War Manpower Commission to the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor also helped publicize the need for women in the labor force. The latter agency was headed by Mary Anderson, a immigrant and former factory worker who was particularly well attuned to the thinking of female employees. The wartime Labor Department itself was headed by a woman, as Frances Perkins was the first woman in history to serve on the Cabinet. Margaret Hickey of the Business & Professional Women's Clubs also played a leading role in recruiting this new labor force. The Labor Department's *Monthly Labor Review* kept up a constant drumbeat on the subject, while private magazines reworked their traditional topics to include this one, with many articles even prior to U.S. entrance into the war. Book publishers cooperated,

too, issuing a number of books by women who took non-traditional jobs and encouraged others to emulate them.

The era's key leader for African Americans was Mary McLeod Bethune, and she joined other women in creating may have been the era's most striking labor-force change. In addition to the employment of married women and older women, black women—for the first time in history—found large numbers of jobs outside of domestic service. Within four years, the proportion of African-American women in those non-union, poorly-paid positions plummeted from 70 percent of all jobs that they held to just 40 percent—and most of these women never again returned to servant life. Instead, in the postwar world, white women would learn to live without black women in the kitchen.

Equally important for the future was the tremendous leap of public vs. private employment. Of some nineteen million working women in the World War II labor force, approximately a million were employed by the federal government. Most were clerical workers known as “government girls”—and this also would not change with the war's end. Although the Rosies would be almost completely laid off from their assembly line jobs with the war's end, the Pentagon and its corporate associates would continue to recruit women to pound typewriters in postwar expansion of the military/industrial complex. Female employment would dip from 35 percent of the labor force in 1944 to 30 percent in 1947—and then again it would gradually rise, as “Rosie the Riveter” transformed herself to “Pamela, the pink-collar worker.”

*See also:* **absenteeism; African-American women; aircraft workers; Anderson, Mary; Bethune, Mary McLeod; birth control/birth rates; boom towns; defense industries; domestic workers; draft; employment; food shortages; electronics industry; “government girls”; Hickey, Margaret; housework; housing; layoffs; magazines; males, comparisons with; munitions; recruitment; Office of War Information; pay; postwar; recruitment; “Rosie the Riveter”; shipbuilding; unions; War Manpower Commission; wives of servicemen**

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## LAMARR, HEDY (1915–2000)

Her World War II contemporaries knew Hedy Lamarr as a glam-

orous movie star, but decades later, she is being recognized as a contributor to wartime electronics research and development.

Hedwig Kiesler was born in Vienna to a wealthy family; she changed her name when she came to America as an experienced film actor—but with a reputation that she did not necessarily want. She later considered her exceptional beauty to have been a curse, but at age seventeen, she played nude scenes in a Czechoslovakian movie that was banned in the United States as obscene. She soon married Austrian munitions manufacturer Fritz Mandl, an older man who also deemed this film pornographic; he attempted to buy and destroy every print of *Ecstasy* (1933). Mandl not only was a prude and a weapons builder, but also an admirer of Hitler's Nazism, and she soon left him.

After living briefly in London, she came to the United States, where Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer featured the newly named Lamarr in *Algiers* (1938). But unlike Katharine Hepburn, who had a feminist mother, the Kiesler family culture and the Vienna of Freud's era had taught young Hedy to value her beauty more than brains, and her personal life was a disaster. She married and divorced five more times during the next three decades, while bearing two children and adopting one. The studio made her a huge star, but she also worked hard in Hollywood during the war years: she made thirteen movies between 1940 and 1945, the best of which may have been *Ziegfeld Girl* (1941) and John Steinbeck's *Tortilla Flat* (1942). Fervently anti-Nazi, she also performed in more than her share of USO shows for soldiers and rallies for war bond sales.

The electronic invention was patented in that same busy period, but this aspect of her life never was publicized: it was not a good fit with the dream-girl image her Hollywood handlers had created. Knowledge of radio waves had been around long enough by World War II that radio became a new warfare tool, but one of the problems was that radio-wave transmissions were fairly easy for an enemy to intercept. Lamarr's knowledge of conditions in Austria in the late 1930s meant that she understood how people trapped in totalitarian conditions desperately wanted to use radio to reach out for help from the Allies, and she put a great deal of personal research and thought into this problem.

Because music and math are epistemological cousins, she joined with composer George Antheil to create a system that kept the sender and the intended receiver synchronized, while also frequently switching radio frequencies to foil eavesdroppers. They conducted their experiments with player-piano rolls, a digital technology that was deemed outdated for the era's entertainment, but which would be highly relevant to future computers. It was granted a patent as "Secret Communications System" in 1942, but perhaps because military intelligence officials dismissed an idea created by an artistically creative couple, their "frequency-hopping" technology was not used in the war. Postwar researchers, however, recognized its value, and it now is considered a pioneer component of both military communications and cellular telephone technology.

Lamarr again defied the times by becoming a U.S. citizen in 1953, an era when there was a great deal of prejudice against foreigners. Five years later, she made the last of twenty-five films and retired. The last of her six marriages ended in 1965, and she published an autobiography the following year. She moved to Florida, where she died at her home in suburban Orlando early in 2000. By the time that computer science developed to the point that researchers rediscovered their idea, the 1942 patent had expired; neither she nor Anthell ever received any royalties.

*See also:* **bond sales; censorship; cryptography; electronics industry; intelligence, military; keypunch operators**

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## LANDLADIES

Because rental housing was extremely scarce in World War II, landlords assumed new importance. For many such women, this represented the first earning opportunity of their lives. Some welcomed renters to their property and lives, but a large number of landlords appear to have abused their new-found power.

The shortage of rental properties varied greatly by location. Places such as Tampa and San Antonio had multiple airfields and were crowded with young wives and children, who wanted to be with the airman during what might be the last months of his life. Naval "camp followers" often went to Great Lakes training facilities and later moved to coastal cities such as San Francisco and Norfolk, Virginia, where they waited near the port where their husbands' ship was based in case it unexpectedly returned from sea. Perhaps the worst rental shortages were in the South, where the families of infantry and artillery cadets would find housing nearly non-existent. All this gave a landlady real power in choosing her tenants—even though renting to a "camp follower" also meant that she was unlikely too stay very long.

Wives of servicemen competed for a rental place with other, usually unmarried, women who also moved. Indeed, twenty-five million people moved during the war, or about one of every five Americans. Los Angeles was flooded with women working in its new aircraft plants, while Detroit's

population soared when its car factories converted to military uses. As men who previously held assembly-line jobs in such places were drafted, women arrived to replace them—but because the draftees' families still lived in such cities, the newcomer women found no place to rent. Landladies could extract longer leases from civilian defense workers—and if not, the stream of newcomers would continue.

Those who suffered most from the housing crisis were African Americans. In an era before fair housing laws were even considered, landladies were perfectly free to refuse to rent to them. Housing segregation was routine in both the North and South, and especially the many African-American women who worked in the munitions industry found themselves crammed into already-crowded homes of the few local black families willing to accept them. African-American women who wanted to accompany their husbands to assignments within the United States had even more difficulty finding a welcoming landlady. In *Bitter Fruit*, for example, Thelma Thurston Gorham lived in a "plywood shack" near Ft. Huachuca, Arizona, which was shared by eleven couples. Each had a room "about seven feet square," furnished only with two army cots. They also shared two sinks "that served as face basins, laundry tubs, and in lieu of bathtubs. There were no facilities for cooking."

Sometimes newcomers to an area found a fairly direct connection between their new employer and their potential landlady. Elkton, Maryland, for instance, was a major munitions center that bordered on the heavily industrial Pennsylvania coast, and recruiters regularly brought young women there from Appalachia. "One rainy night," said writer Mary Heaton Vorse in *Woman's Home Companion*:

The doorbell rang at Mrs. Betty Grubb's [home] in Oxford, Pennsylvania. The bus driver of the Triumph Explosives Company called out, 'Mrs. Grubb, can't you take these two defense girls in?'... Nancy and Jo ... had been riding all night in the crowded company bus.

When Mrs. Grubb took the newcomers in from the rain, her home sheltered seven tenants, one of whom had begged to sleep in the attic. Each paid \$8 a week, and the resulting \$56 a week was more money than she ever expected to earn—as well as more than the weekly earnings of most female defense workers. Her connection with the company, however, was unusual, as most employers did little or nothing to help their employees find housing. Even the company that provided this service for these white Appalachians did not do the same for their African-American women. They were expected to depend on networks of friends, often church-based, and to commute from whatever ghetto was closest.

Both female defense workers and servicemen's wives found that many landladies openly stated their preference for male renters. Several writers agreed with Josephine Von Miklos's observation of an "anti-female tenor of many landladies, [whose] ... good rooms were for 'gentlemen only.'" Perhaps they thought that men would pay higher rents, a reasonable assumption given gender disparities in pay. More likely,



though, they viewed themselves as inherently responsible for the morals of female renters, something that was not the case with men. In fact, if a “gentleman” was accompanied by a woman, landlady suspiciousness often returned. It was not unusual for couples to be required to produce their marriage license before they could occupy a room.

A room was as much as most could expect: getting an apartment, even a small one, was a much more difficult task. Women with children could expect weeks of pavement pounding before their homelessness ended, even if they had money. An affluent naval wife in New Orleans, for example, finally ran a newspaper ad questioning the patriotism of property owners who refused to provide a home for the children of a high-ranking officer who was putting his life at risk. Surely, she believed, someone in this historic city had a home used only in winter or a former carriage house or a maid’s apartment that they did not need. She appealed to women who never thought of themselves as landladies, asking them to become one in this emergency.

Other ads sponsored by state and federal agencies urged homeowners to “share the space.” The Office of War Information and other agencies created posters and advertising to convey the message that it was morally wrong to leave a guest bedroom vacant and to value family privacy over patriotic rentals to strangers. Civic groups pointed out not only the need, but also the possibility of getting materials for home improvements if they were used to accommodate renters. The most satisfying method was to add an outdoor staircase that reached a second-floor apartment, a solution that afforded privacy to both the landlady and her renter.

Many landladies, however, were happy to leave their property unimproved, given that there seemed to be women desperate enough to rent it anyway. Some crowded in an unconscionable number of renters: Mary Vorse, writing for *Harper’s*, cited an enterprising couple near a munitions center who moved in with relatives and rented their vacant one-bathroom house to twenty-two “girls” at \$3.50 per week for each. The living room was home to four, while two slept in the kitchen. The term “hot bed” arose to refer to sleeping space that was in almost constant use by workers on the day, swing, and night shifts of factories that ran twenty-four-hours and seven-days weekly. The \$77 a week that this couple got in rent was a huge and unexpected financial bonanza.

The pattern was unfortunately common, and some landladies raised petty despotism to an art form. Many banned appliances, including coffee makers and toasters, which forced tenants to eat even breakfast out—in overcrowded and expensive restaurants, during an era prior to fast food. They also banned food brought in: one woman whose landlady refused to permit food returned home to find that a new box of chocolates had been confiscated. Some refused to allow laundry to be done in the (virtually always) shared bathroom, which meant time-consuming and costly trips to commercial laundries.

Many homes in this era also lacked telephones, but some landladies who had them proved stingy in that area, too,

refusing to allow renters to either make or receive calls. One of the worse cases was a landlady so concerned with keeping her electric bill low that she allowed only one 15-watt light bulb—and pounded on the tenant’s door each night at 10:00 p.m. for that to be shut off. Another required her tenants to ask for toilet paper each time they entered the bathroom, with the objective of counting the number of pieces used. Indeed, according to sociologist Edmund Bacon, when the Office of Price Administration finally held hearings on the issue of exorbitant rent, officials found that the “flood of tenant compliments” was not so much about money as about “accumulated resentment in landlord-tenant relationships.”

Most of cases of miserliness were in rural areas where landladies had been poor during the Great Depression. While this may make their behavior more understandable, they nonetheless exploited other women who were forced into their inhospitable towns by the war. The specific and local nature of the situation may best seen by the experience of Barbara Klaw, who joined her army husband in Neosho, Missouri. The best option she could find there was a room furnished only with a bed and one straight chair—and rent higher than what she had paid for an entire apartment in New York City.

Not all landladies were inhospitable, of course. Boarding, or having food provided with rent, was rare, but some landladies grew to see the young women who rented their spare bedrooms as replacements for sons and daughters gone to war and invited them to occasional meals. Others offered kitchen privileges at times when the family was not using the kitchen, and they sometimes got to know their tenants during cooking or dishwashing. Two young mothers who shared an attic apartment even found their landlady offering to baby sit so that they could enjoy evenings with their sailor husbands.

The personality of the landlady and her renter was overriding factor in whether or not these relationships succeeded—and although most stories on the subject were written from the viewpoint of the renter, it also was true that landladies had valid reasons to be dubious about renters who often were very young. Muriel Van Tuyl Trigg was one such: she had a heavy financial investment in a California tourist court, and even though the cabins were vacant because tourism ended with gas and tire rationing, she was reluctant to risk young renters. After finally overcoming her qualms, she soon saw that she had been wrong to think they would trash her property:

These amazing young women worked by night, and by day, cleaned, washed and ironed, planned their big turkey dinner, wrapped Christmas packages, and wrote faithful daily letters to their husbands. Then, learning that there were some boys from their home town who would have to spend a lonely Christmas, they invited them ... I felt very humble. These misjudged youngsters are earning the better world they deserve.

Part of that better world would be soaring rates of home ownership, when the GI Bill made that dream possible for millions of Americans. Landladies lost their power but

regained their privacy, and homes that housed more than one family became as rare in the 1960s as they had been common in the 1940s.

**See also:** African-American women; boom towns; camp followers; defense industries; GI Bill; housing; munitions; pay; recruitment; travel; wives of servicemen

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### LANGDON, GRACE (1889–1967)

With years of experience in early-childhood education, Dr. Grace Langdon became the first head of a federal agency designed for the care of children of working mothers. As child-care director of the Works Progress Administration from its 1933 creation, she served the needs of very poor women.

Organized child care itself was still somewhat novel, and the idea of *publicly provided* care for preschoolers is not entirely accepted even today. Thus, Langdon's establishment of some two thousand free WPA child nurseries (the word then commonly used) was something of a bureaucratic miracle. Although they were racially segregated, as almost everything was in that era, she managed to place at least one in every state, another significant achievement. Many cities had more than one WPA nursery; New Orleans, for example, had three for African Americans and three for whites. The nurseries not only gave mothers a better opportunity to compete in the limited labor market of the Great Depression, but also provided jobs for teachers, teachers' aides, as well as custodians and cooks. The usual situation was that the local or state government provided the space, while salaries were paid with federal dollars.

When World War II began, the need for organized child care soon became obvious to private employers, especially in defense plants that recruited women to work all hours

of the day and week. In a reversal of the previous decade, employers now were competing for the labor of women to staff the huge industrial complex that built the materiel to win the war. Unfortunately, however, most managers chose to reinvent the wheel, ignoring Dr. Langdon's vast experience in this area. Some, particularly Kaiser Industries on the West Coast, did an excellent job; others, especially school systems that undertook preschool programs, discovered how difficult it is to meet such highly-individualized needs.

But that was not yet known in December 1942, when the White House decided to phase out the Depression-associated WPA, including its child care division. By April, all two thousand were closed—despite many protesting letters, telegrams, and phone calls to Langdon's office. Other agencies to address the current need were set up under other funding provided by the Lanham Act—and when they were established, Langdon was passed over for inexperienced young men who were given the opportunity to head these better-funded new programs. Susan B. Anthony raged:

When the day came that Mr. [Paul] McNutt, in his capacity as director of the Federal Security Agency, appointed a Day-care Coordinator to harmonize programs of *all* Federal agencies on child care, whom did he select?... Not Dr. Langdon, who was experienced, but a young man loaned from the Children's Bureau, Charles I. Schottland, who, though very sincere and hard-working, had never had to do with a nursery school in his life ...

Langdon nonetheless continued with the federal government, working in a lesser capacity on child care to meet the critical wartime need. After more than three decades with the federal government, she retired in 1946, soon after the war ended. Her "retirement" was extremely busy, as she served as a visiting professor at numerous colleges and universities and continued to write. After 1948, King Features syndicated a newspaper column that she co-wrote with Irving Stout, "Today's Children." Among Langdon's books of this period were *Your Child's Play* (1957) and *Bringing Up Children* (1960). She also was a consultant to the American Toy Institute and volunteered in a number of professional associations.

Grace Langdon had been born in Seward, Nebraska; she attended a local teacher's college and initially was an elementary teacher and principal in Nebraska and Missouri. In 1925, she enrolled in New York City's Teachers College of Columbia University and eventually earned her bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees from that prestigious school. She published her first book in 1931, *Home Guidance for Young Children* and followed that up with *Similarities and Differences in Teaching* (1933), before receiving her 1936 PhD. An excellent example of this "New Woman" era, she retained her maiden name when she married Edwin Ackerman in 1936. After her Washington-based career, they retired to Tempe, Arizona, where he preceded her in death. She continued to write, publishing a total of some two dozen books.

The nation, however, had grown more conservative in some ways during the last years of Langdon's life than it had been in her youth, and her obituary used her husband's

name, not the one that she used all her life. This doubtless was a factor in her historical obscurity—but Grace Langdon should be recognized as the creator of a successful national program of great benefit to women and children. In less than a decade, she set up two thousand tuition-free nurseries, a stellar example of executive ability and political skill. Her achievement liberated working mothers from the burden of finding adequate and affordable care for their children—something that the nation has yet to fully replicate.

*See also:* **child care; children; defense industries; recruitment; teachers; underutilization**

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## LANGE, DOROTHEA MARGARETTA (1895–1965)

Famous for her photographs, especially of worried women during the Great Depression, Dorothea Lange had known since childhood that she wanted to be a photographer. Her birth name, Dorothea Margareta Nutzhorn, reflected the German heritage of her parents, immigrants who settled in Hoboken, New Jersey. Her mother became a librarian to support Dorothea and her brother after their father, an attorney, deserted the family. Dorothea also had to overcome the handicap of being crippled in one leg after polio at age seven.

To satisfy her mother, she trained as a teacher, but had no interest in that profession, and after briefly studying photography at Columbia University, she left for San Francisco in 1918. At the same time, she adopted her mother's maiden name as her surname, and when she married a much older man two years later, she retained her new name. In addition to bearing two sons during the 1920s, Lange also established herself so well as a San Francisco portrait photographer that she was able to provide the greater share of the family income.

She was sufficiently well connected with California's wealthy families that her business did not suffer greatly when the Roaring Twenties collapsed into widespread economic suffering in the 1930s. Perhaps because of her painful childhood, however, Lange was extremely empathetic with the troubles of the nation's unemployed and took a series of

photos that documented them. This sensitivity in capturing emotions resulted in a 1934 exhibition, which especially emphasized the faces of white-collar men shocked by being displaced in the system they thought guaranteed their higher status. The most famous became "Migrant Mother," a California farm worker whose photo Lange took in 1936.

The exhibition led to her employment with the New Deal's Farm Security Administration (FSA), where she met economist Paul Taylor; they divorced their respective spouses and married each other late in 1935. They did several projects jointly, including *American Exodus: A Record of Human Erosion* (1939). That book came out in the year that the war began in Europe, and in 1941, the year that the U.S. entered World War II, Dorothea Lange became the first woman to receive a Guggenheim Fellowship. (Peggy Guggenheim only recently had begun her important art patronage in America; she lived in Europe when the Nazis began their expansions, and in 1940, just before France fell, Guggenheim bought a tremendous amount of work from worried artists that she shipped to safety in America.)

Japan's fascists attacked Hawaii's Pearl Harbor in December 1941, and early in 1942, the U.S. government removed more than 100,000 Japanese Americans from their West Coast homes to what were essentially prison camps further inland. Under the aegis of the War Relocation Authority (WRA) that governed their lives, Lange photographed the pain of these people, most of whom were U.S. citizens, as they were forcibly transported to strange new places. A collection of her photos on this subject was posthumously published under the name of the rule that evicted the Japanese Americans, *Executive Order 9066* (1972).

In part because her pictures showed the point of view of the Japanese Americans more than that of the WRA, Lange left this agency in 1943 to join the more liberal Office of War Information (OWI). Working out of wartime San Francisco, she concentrated on defense industries and especially the women who took new jobs as welders and riveters in shipyards and aircraft manufacturing plants. Esther Bubley, who had been Lange's colleague at the FSA, followed the same career path; Bubley's wartime photos primarily documented the difficulties of wartime travel. The OWI, of course, closed with the war, and Lange returned to freelancing.

She did assignments for *Life*, the era's very popular magazine that long had featured photojournalist Margaret Bourke-White—who, like Lange, had fashioned her surname by using her mother's. Lange traveled widely, including taking photographs in Asia, Egypt, and Latin America; her pictures in Ireland later were published as a book, with an essay by her son. Lange devoted the last years of her life to planning the first solo exhibit that was granted to a woman at the Museum of Modern Art—but she was dying of cancer, and the retrospective turned out to be posthumous. It opened in New York three months after she died in Berkeley, California.

Thousands of Lange's photographs belonged to the government agencies for which she worked and now are available at the National Archives and Library of Congress.



Private galleries own others, and several collections have been published as books.

**See also:** **artists; Bourke-White, Margaret; Bubley, Esther; Japanese-American women; Pearl Harbor; magazines; Office of War Information**

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## LAWYERS, FEMALE

The history of female lawyers in America is a long and complex struggle against not only the usual discrimination based on gender, but also tremendous variants of state laws. Iowa was the first state to admit a woman to the practice of law in 1869, but that precedent had to be slugged out in every state, often with superior court justices whose views on women's place were very conservative. Female lawyers remained very unusual in the early twentieth century, partly because they faced significant barriers with all-male juries. As late as 1961, when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled on the subject, three states barred women from juries completely, while eighteen states had automatic exemptions for women that effectively meant most juries were all-male. It was not until 1975, when the Court reversed itself, that gender discrimination in the jury box finally was banned.

All of these factors make it understandable that few women during the World War II had opted to become attorneys—and yet it was a time when female clients increased, as legions of women needed legal advice on a range of issues. Many needed help with the soldiers' allotments and other military benefits. Getting married or obtaining a divorce was complicated by wartime circumstances. Women who were deprived of the legal head of the household for long stretches of time—and who realistically could become widows—needed help in straightening out wills, insurance, and a multitude of financial

matters. Those classified as enemy aliens particularly were fraught with legal worries.

The profession remained virtually all-male, and because it was not designated as "essential civilian employment" under Selective Service rules, many lawyers were drafted. Women, however, did not replace men in law offices in the way that they did in factories—and not only because few women were available, but also because discriminatory attitudes lingered. The experience of forty-two-year-old woman who tried to best utilize her legal background for the war effort is but one example. She anonymously responded to an article in *Independent Woman*, the publication of Business & Professional Women (BPW), that admonished women to do more to replace drafted men:

I went to the local United States Employment Office to ask if women lawyers were needed anywhere. I was asked my age, and when I gave it, I was told that if I were still in my twenties and a good stenographer I could be used, but that no employer wanted "old women past thirty."

... I took and passed the examination for Treasury Enforcement Agent; Junior Investigator; and Deputy U.S. Marshal. The information on ... these applications required several days of work to complete ... When I called for this appointment I was told that the stenographer had made a mistake in sending out a notice to me as only men were wanted.

Although the Labor Department was headed by a woman, Frances Perkins, the best that its publication, *Monthly Labor Review*, could say in 1943 was that "some headway is ... being made by woman lawyers in State and local governmental units." As evidence, however, it cited only a half-dozen cases of new hires—and all but one of these were clerkships or related to public service/legal aid. Worse, many of the female lawyers told interviewers that they had chosen public over private employment because civil service jobs offered more protection from arbitrary firing, especially in the postwar economy. According to the Labor Department report, these women shared "the impression that those taking private positions will surely lose them when the men come back at the end of the war."

On the positive side, a few women who were able to travel managed to obtain significant positions as lawyers in the postwar world, especially as representatives of the United States abroad. Liberal organizations such as the YWCA reached out to women with legal skills for help with millions of refugees who were displaced from their property by war. In occupied Germany and Japan, female lawyers arguably found more opportunity to practice their profession than they had at home.

Finally, the director of the Women's Army Corps, Oveta Culp Hobby, was a lawyer of exceptional brilliance, but the legal arm of the army, the Judge Advocate General (JAG), underutilized her skills and those of other women. Male JAG lawyers wrote the regulations for women in the army, including such touchy subjects as discipline and rules on pregnancy, without input from female attorneys. Worse, when problems arose over disciplinary procedures (including one

possibly illegal court martial of a woman), Hobby got no cooperation on these specialized legal cases. According to WAC historian Mattie Treadwell, Hobby helpfully sent the JAG “a list of forty-four Wacs who were lawyers, with the suggestion that he might wish them to attend his school at Ann Arbor [Michigan] so that some might be qualified to sit on the Army’s highest Boards of Review.” The JAG refused the offer, stating:

The Boards of Review ... are statutory boards composed of members of the Judge Advocate General’s Department ... I do not deem it practicable or desirable to change the membership of such a board merely for the consideration of a particular class of cases ...

The legal fields in which a member of the Women’s Army Corps may be used are so limited ... it appears to me to be neither practical nor ... advantageous.

To a fairly large extent, WACs were being punished for their good behavior: because most were so motivated that they required little discipline, the planned unit of military police for them never was created—and thus they needed almost no prosecutors, defenders, or review board members under the Military Code of Justice.

Law and its enforcement essentially are tools of conservatism, and another way in which that philosophy revealed itself was in the largely unchanged nature of law schools. Although many colleges reached out for female students because their male enrollment plummeted during the war, law schools made no particular effort to diversify their student bodies. Even medical schools did more to increase the potential number of female physicians than law schools did with female attorneys. That, and many other aspects of the law and lawyers, did not change until the revival of the Equal Rights Amendment in the 1970s.

**See also:** African-American women’s club; allotments; benefits, military; Business & Professional Women; colleges; divorce; draft; enemy aliens; employment; Equal Rights Amendment; Hobby, Oveta Culp; jury duty; marriage; occupied Germany; occupied Japan; Perkins, Frances; postwar; underutilization; YWCA

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## LAYOFFS

Most women who took on “Rosie the Riveter” roles expected to do this sort of blue-collar work—or any paid work at all—only “for the duration.” *Atlantic*, a generally liberal magazine, reported that at the beginning of World War II, “as many as 95 percent of women war workers planned to quit as soon as victory was certain.” When that time came, however, “polls began to reveal that the percentage was dropping sharply. The trend has been steady,” *Atlantic* continued, “until now every one of the 80,000 women in Chicago radio plants wants to stay on.”

The trend was true all over. According to author Penny Colman, in Detroit car factories that produced military vehicles during the war, 85 percent of women did not want to be laid off. But they, like those in most places and industries, had to step aside when the pink slip came and factories retooled for civilian production. When hiring began again, veterans had the legal right to go to the head of the line—and in the view of most Americans, including most women, veterans had the moral right, as well as the legal right to the first shot at employment. Women who wanted to work, especially in blue-collar jobs, found very little support, and most soon stopped expressing their personal preferences.

Of the approximately twenty million women in the labor force at the war’s end, about five million—or one in every four—was unwillingly laid off from her job. According to Colman, a half-million of those “never found work again.” Most who did find jobs moved back into traditional “women’s work,” which inevitably paid less. Instead of “Rosie the Riveter,” a woman became “Wendy the Waitress” or “Sally the Salesclerk.”

Her income was more likely to depend on commissions or tips—on pleasing her often-male customers—than on a guaranteed hourly wage. Almost none would have a union backing her employment rights. Interestingly enough, although African-American women suffered all these disadvantages and more, the positive wartime employment changes arguably proved more permanent for them. The war’s decline in domestic service jobs never rebounded after its end: black women found jobs other than maids and cooks, while white women learned (with the help of new appliances) to do their own housework.

Whether or not workers wanted it, war production began shutting down early in 1945, and women’s share of the labor force plummeted more quickly than it had grown. Even in white-collar salaried jobs, the numbers strikingly rose and fell: in 1940, before the war began, women held 35 percent of those jobs; the number rose to a dramatic 49 percent, or almost half, in 1945, when the war ended, before falling back down to 39 percent two years later. In agriculture, women jumped from 8 percent in 1940 to 22 percent in 1945, partly because of the Women’s Land Army. With its disappearance,

the percentage of women in farm jobs halved just two years later to 11 percent in 1947.

The media, especially women's magazines, did appreciable worrying about the issue of layoffs long before they began. Indeed, the war was scarcely underway before opinion-makers began to fret that women would not willingly relinquish the gains they were making. At the same time that the headlines pleaded for women to join war industries, they also warned women not to take this call too seriously or to believe that it would be permanent.

Already in 1943, the *New York Times Magazine* lent its pages to Mary Anderson, head of the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor to inquire, "16,000,000 Women: What Will Happen After?" Although he was one of the most liberal men in the Roosevelt administration, Interior Secretary Harold Ickes warned of the potential problem early in 1944. At the same time, Margaret Hickey, the top woman on the War Manpower Commission, switched from recruiting women into industry to writing about postwar job plans. After victory in Europe, *Atlantic* candidly titled its summary "Getting Rid of the Women," while *Business Week* proclaimed "Women's Exit." Even magazines with female audiences joined the chorus: *Woman's Home Companion*, for example, bluntly exhorted "Give Back the Jobs."

Many Americans couched their willingness to send women back to the kitchen in terms of their personal history, as the Great Depression of the 1930s never was far from collective consciousness in the 1940s. Although they seldom reasoned out their economic philosophy, these people were essentially fatalists who believed that depression was the capitalistic norm and prosperity the exception—and they fully expected a crash at the war's end. Sociologist Randolph Ray, for example, who specialized in advice on marriage, told his largely female readers: "Postwar America will not be a land of limitless opportunity ... Jobs will be scarce." A woman who took one, the implication was, thereby deprived a man of the job that was basic to his self-esteem.

Businessmen added to this view. Prewar commerce often assumed that jobs should be meted out according to household need, and the corollary of this maxim was that men, as presumed heads of households, were axiomatically most deserving. The war replaced this hiring precept with another based on the need of industry, and for a few years, women and minorities had a greater opportunity. War, for them, meant a chance to pay off the mortgage and save against the depression they knew would come. Prosperity was an aberration in this view, and good times were possible only with the sacrifice of young lives.

Advocates for women and other excluded groups thus had to first challenge these pessimistic tenets. "We are afraid," said Anderson, "as well we might be if we think of our economy in the old terms"—but the Women's Bureau chief went on to explain the New Deal's new economy. The old business rules had been wrong, she and others emphasized, and things already had changed that would avert a crash and allow women a permanent place in the economy. With

Labor Department chief Frances Perkins and other Roosevelt administrators, mechanisms such as Social Security had been implemented to prevent another Great Depression.

First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, for example, foretold an optimistic future in a 1943 speech to the Business & Professional Women (BPW). Although the details were not yet clear even in her own prescient mind, what the First Lady was envisioning would turn out to be the 1947 Marshall Plan—which, by providing former allies and enemies with money to buy from the United States, would rebuild Europe while surging the American economy forward. Such assurances, however, had to be repeated before even a portion of the public was diverted from the seeming return of the Great Depression. Over and over again, New Dealers had to say that the solution was not to fight over slices of the economic pie, but to increase the size of that pie.

Congress and the courts were far less progressive, however, and equality for women was far from the legal reality. Congress could not bring itself to mandate equity for the millions of women who served as "production soldiers," either with equal pay at the time of employment or with equal benefits at layoffs. This injustice was especially obvious in the case of married women—who arguably had made the greatest personal sacrifices when they took a defense job. Although unemployment compensation (another economic mechanism that had not been available in earlier eras) was a real boon for postwar readjustment, the law under which it operated did not see married women as genuine workers entitled to return of the money they had paid in to the system. "If a woman is married, she isn't eligible," *Atlantic* explained, "for the law assumes ... she forthwith took over household duties."

Most media echoed such platitudes, rarely thinking about the woman who might be married to an unemployable man—to say nothing of the woman who had invested in education and wanted a career, not merely a job. Yet, despite these handicapping attitudes and laws, the two-thirds or more of women who told various pollsters that they planned to continue to work at the war's end ultimately would succeed in doing just that. Although there were massive layoffs in the late 1940s, the numbers of women in the work force again began to rise in the early 1950s—despite that era's homemaker image.

Most women, however, were not intellectually honest about this. At the same time that they said they wanted to work, they also echoed maxims about societal priority for the home and rationalized their own employment as exceptional. Just as they said they worked during the war because of national need, they now explained their employment as family need—and expanded the definition of family "need" to include countless items not considered necessary in their own youth. A new house, a new car, new appliances—all these and more were essential to middle-class status in the postwar world, and women went back to work to achieve them. Arguably the biggest change in women's status between the 1940s and the 1950s was a switch from major producer to major consumer.

Even though few women could bring themselves to say



that they worked because they wanted to, the genie was out of the bottle—and it never would return. “There is no example,” writer Dorothy Thompson predicted in 1943, “in which a class or group of people who have once succeeded in expanding the area of their lives is ever persuaded again to restrict it.” Decades would pass in the achievement of these individual liberations, but the essential movement began with the recognition, as Eleanor Roosevelt suggested, that the key lay in a redefinition of the economy itself.

Working women did not vanish with victory; instead they transformed themselves into different kinds of workers. In part, this was because any wartime woman understood that in a contest with GI Joe, she would be the loser. The veteran’s right to a job was as inviolate as his right to a seat on a crowded wartime train. But because Johnny had come marching home did not mean that Rosie had to accept the kitchen for the rest of her life. If she couldn’t have the factory’s tools, then she would take the office’s typewriter—and in doing so, she entered a segment of the economy that would boom, while he unknowingly joined one that would stagnate in the postwar world.

**See also:** African-American women; Anderson, Mary; Business & Professional Women’s club; defense industries; demobilization; domestic workers; electronic industry; Equal Rights Amendment; GI Bill; Hickey, Margaret; housework; labor force; radio; magazines; Perkins, Frances; postwar; Roosevelt, Eleanor; “Rosie the Riveter”; recruitment; Thompson, Dorothy; veterans; War Manpower Commission; Women’s Land Army

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## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

The League of Women Voters (LWV) is the direct intellectual heir of the major organization that used tough political strategy to win the vote for women in 1920. Women in some western states, who full voting rights much earlier, formed the initial body in 1916, and after the full victory, the National American Woman Suffragist Association (NAWSA) transformed itself into the league. Many suffragists, however, did not see the LWV as necessary in the way that the NAWSA had been, and membership dropped precipitously. Although the Roaring Twenties brought radical social change, conservatives dominated the political realm—and the league’s political ineffectiveness can be seen in that only two of its twenty-four legislative goals for the decade were achieved. One of those two, a program for free maternity care, was repealed with the onset of the Great Depression.

The league’s response was to become more conservative. Its own records showed that a flood of female candidates in the early 1920s had slowed to a trickle in the 1930s—but the few women who dared to run for office found themselves ostracized by the non-partisan LWV as “too political.” By 1941, when the United States entered World War II, the league had moved from being a feminist organization to one absorbed with civic good and with improvements in the voting process. Among its goals, of course, was increasing voter participation, but the virtually all-white league dodged the issue of registering African Americans to vote.

More distressing in terms of the organization’s original feminism is that its publications, *Action* and *Trends in Government*, made almost no acknowledgment of the vast changes in the status of women during the war. Legal discriminations against women remained in many states, especially in areas such as jury duty and college admissions,

but the league platform for 1942–44 confirmed its opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment. The major organizational wartime goal was to see that (largely male) soldiers got their absentee ballots in the 1942 and 1944 elections. While laudable, this was hardly feminist.

Marguerite Wells of Minneapolis was the League's president during most of the Roosevelt administration, and she tried hard to push her organization towards greater liberalism. This was especially evident in her attempts to bring internationalism to the top of the agenda, but many leaguers were traditionally isolationists and/or pacifists. League historian Barbara Stuhler began her chapter on this era with the 1940 national convention in New York City:

It proved to be the last time that the original League leaders would be together at a League convention. [Suffrage activists] Carrie Chapman Catt, Maud Wood Park, ... and Marguerite Wells were at the head table to hear one of their most distinguished members, Eleanor Roosevelt, give one of the banquet addresses. The League was in better health than it had been after its first decade, but the world was not. Barely one month after the convention's close, France fell ...

After the United States entered the war, the body adopted "The League Declaration of Its Role in World War II," but the document admitted internally that the league lagged. A typical paragraph, as presented by Stuhler, read: "the League feels it should be reborn to do some of the tasks in some of the ways it has known before, in teaching both itself and others an understanding of the war...and winning the peace thereafter." Yet in 1943, when Wells sent out a proposed resolution on the yet-to-be-created United Nations, only five of fourteen board members responded with firm approval. The LWV's most visible wartime action, in fact, may have taken place prior to Pearl Harbor: in recognition of July 4th, 1941, local leagues participated in "campaign flashes" for the "Battle of Production." Winning the war by producing materiel for the beleaguered British was the theme for parade floats, store windows, and newspaper and radio ads from Newark to Seattle.

The LWV's closest counterpart in the 1940s was Business & Professional Women (BPW), which was much more concerned with issues that related to women and the war. Although BPW did not campaign for the ERA either, the pages of its monthly magazine, *Independent Woman*, were filled with crusades for equal pay, the admission of women into the military, and other goals than were both more beneficial to women and more directly connected to the war. While BPW kept up a constant drumbeat encouraging women to enter defense industries, the LWV assumed most of its members did not wish to be employed.

Both organizations finally endorsed the ERA and returned to their feminist roots in the 1970s, when the National Organization for Women (NOW) and other groups began to attract their members. Today, the league has more than twelve hundred chapters throughout the nation, and although it still does not endorse candidates for office, it has served as a training ground for thousands of women in politics. It

maintains a stellar reputation for unbiased study of political issues, and virtually all politicians recognize the value of the league's well-informed and selfless members, whose primary goal is honest and democratic government.

*See also:* **African-American women; Business & Professional Women's club; colleges; defense industries; Equal Rights Amendment; jury duty; lawyers, female; magazines; pay; Roosevelt, Eleanor; United Nations**

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## LEE, HAZEL AH YING (1912–1944)

Hazel Ah Ying Lee was one of thirty-eight members of the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) who died in the service of her country.

Her affluent father fled China's civil war in its early stages; he moved to Portland, Oregon, and married into its Chinese-American community. By 1932, when Hazel and her older brother were in their early adulthood, he financed flying lessons for them. The next year Japan began its invasion of mainland Asia by conquering Manchuria; and when the Japanese moved southward, attacking coastal cities in 1937, the siblings were sufficiently capable pilots that they attempted to join Nationalist China's air force.

With her brother and nine other male Chinese Americans, twenty-five-year-old Lee sailed there, but the Nationalist military refused to accept a woman—even though it was commanded by Chiang Kai-Shek, whose wife also had an American background and was a highly visible political figure. Lee waited a few months, hoping for changed minds, while teaching school in her father's village. She was bilingual, but the cultural gap was too great: she clashed with her paternal family, and when she returned to the United States, went on from Portland to the freedom of New York City.

There she learned of the 1942 formation of the WASP—an idea so unconventional that many believed it to be either untrue or highly secret. Like some two thousand other women, though, she ferreted out the facts and by early July, was in training at the WASP's chief facility, Avenger Field in Sweetwater, Texas. Her appearance created problems unlike those

of other WASPs, however, as some Texans assumed she was a spy. More than once, she had reason to fear being killed by someone unable to distinguish a Japanese enemy from a Chinese ally. Her colleagues in the WASP, though, remembered her as unfazed by this and other near-death incidents; they described her as friendly, funny, and a general favorite.

After their military training, WASPs flew all over the country, and Lee's primary station was at Romulus, Michigan, near Detroit. She "washed out," or failed, an instrument course at St. Joseph, Missouri, but completed officer training at Orlando, Florida. Meanwhile, she talked to colleagues about an arranged marriage as her postwar plan: she intended to wed a Chinese major who was Chiang Kai-shek's personal pilot. He initially had resisted—perhaps because, according to author Marianne Verges, "Ah Ying was homely," with "buck teeth" and a "flat chest." The marriage was carried out, however, at least on paper.

Those paper records would turn into a tragedy for all concerned. On a cold day in late November 1944, she headed west to Great Falls, Montana, where she would deliver a plane manufactured in Niagara Falls, New York. Verges explained:

A fierce Arctic wind thrust an early winter storm across the Canadian border ... Ah Ying got caught in Bismarck, North Dakota, where ... [there was] a horde of grounded aircraft with ice and snow ...

When Ah Ying reached East Base, Great Falls, ... there were at least a dozen P-63s in the traffic pattern ... She called the tower and began her final approach. When she was two or three miles from the boundary of the field, the controller spotted another Kingcobra on the same approach ...

The other plane remained silent ... [although] the controller shouted frantically ... As the planes collided, the wing tank of the upper ship exploded ... Both aircraft plunged to the ground and skidded down the runaway, trailing fire. An officer ... leaped into the burning wreckage and dragged Ah Ying's burning body from the cockpit.

The male pilot who hit her (because his radio was out) survived. She lived two days, in great pain, and when she died, the tragedy was compounded by the fact that the WASP also was dying. By late 1944, Americans foresaw the victory that would come in 1945, and so many male pilots had been trained that they were eager to displace the WASP. Congress forced its commander, famed aviator Jacqueline Cochran, to disband the program by the end of 1944. This meant that when Hazel Ah Ying Lee was killed, most of her colleagues were collecting their last paychecks and heading home in time for Christmas. They did not know that her personnel records had been changed to list Yin Cheung Louie, her "husband," as her next-of-kin, instead of the Lee family of Portland. For almost a year, military authorities searched vainly for this man in the moving Chinese army, while her body laid unclaimed in a Montana morgue.

**See also:** aircraft manufacture; Chinese-American women; Chiang, Madame; Cochran, Jacqueline; fatalities; Japanese-American women; WASP



Hazel Ying Lee joined the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) in February 1943 and flew pursuit (fighter) aircraft from factories to air bases across the continental United States. In November 1944, she died in a two-plane crash when she and another pilot collided in the air over Great Falls Air Force Base, Montana. *Courtesy of the National Archives*

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### LEE, ROSE HUM (1904–1964)

Montana native Rose Hum Lee lived in China when Japan brutally conquered the coastal cities of that vast nation in the late 1930s. Although she died prior to widespread recognition of her intellectual contributions to American life, she is increasingly seen as an important scholar on Asia, especially China.



Born in Butte, she was the daughter of Hum Wah Long, a miner who became successful enough as a merchant that he managed to return to China and bring a wife back to Montana, something that few other Chinese men were able to do. Although she was illiterate, Rose's mother, Lin Fong, gave her daughter an American name and insisted that she go to school. After her 1921 high school graduation and some local college work, Rose Hum married Ku Young Lee, an engineering student at the University of Pennsylvania, and moved with him to his home in China. Living primarily in Canton (now Guangzhou) during the next decades, she developed a solid business background: as Rose Hum Lee, she worked in aspects of the silk industry, as well as in banking and insurance.

She thus was strongly affected when Japan attacked Manchuria in 1933 and began moving south over the next years. Peking (now Beijing) fell in July 1937; Shanghai followed that November and Nanking in December. Canton held out until October 1938. Nearby Hong Kong, however, actually remained free until after Pearl Harbor, not falling until Christmas Day of 1941, and Lee worked via that British colony for several months of 1938–39. Like other Americans living in China, especially women who were Protestant missionaries, Lee was shocked by Japan's easy conquests—but not even famed novelist Pearl Buck could capture the attention on this with Americans absorbed by their own Great Depression.

As Japan took over China piece by piece, Lee used her contacts with Chinese Americans to raise funds for devastated civilians, many of whom not only were bombed out of their homes but also subjected to torture and rape. Her business skills were evident as Lee developed several organizational conduits for aid, including the Overseas Relief Unit, the Emergency Committee for the Relief of Refugees, and the Red Cross. She took even greater risks to serve as a translator of Japanese radio messages that she relayed to the Chinese government in exile.

When the war became worldwide with Germany's conquests in Europe in 1939, Lee divorced and returned to the United States. In her 1960 book, she would recall her last days in China:

Americans rallied to China relief, and Madame Chiang Kai-shek's war work provided the example. The number of American women who raised money for her "warphans" is unknown, but there was scarcely a [Chinese-American] community that did not hold "Bowl of Rice" benefits ...

Coinciding with the mounting admiration for the Chinese and China came agitation for the repeal of [immigration restrictions] ... Articles abounded on "Are We Afraid of Justice?", "Drop the Asiatic Colour Bar" ..., "Our Great Wall," and "Our Race Snobbery."

As Lee had been born in the United States, she had no immigration problems when she returned. While caring for an orphaned Chinese child, she studied at the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh, where she earned a master's degree in 1942, and at the University of Chicago, where she

completed her doctorate in 1947. Perhaps the isolation of a scholar's life was mentally necessary after the trauma of China in the late 1930s, but perhaps her case was still another of the many instances in which American institutions, including the government, underutilized the abilities of women. Knowing Asia as she did, she could have been an invaluable resource in the Pacific Theater of Operations—but she was one of many available Chinese-American and Japanese-American women who were not sent to that front.

An academic for the remainder of her life, Dr. Lee issued *The Growth and Decline of Chinese Communities in the Rocky Mountains* (1947); the next year, perhaps at the urging of her child, she published a three-act mystery play titled *Little Lee Bobo, or the Chinese Detective*. Another serious work, *The City: Urbanization in Major World Regions* (1955), clinched her academic career, while *The Chinese in the United States of America* (1960), became a classic—despite negative reactions from many Asians, who viewed Lee's honesty about immigrant life, especially tongs, as inappropriate. Her colleagues in sociology at Chicago's Roosevelt University had more understanding, and they named her as the first Chinese-American woman to chair a university department—in the 1950s, a decade of presumed decline in the status of women.

That decade also was absorbed with the "loss" of China, as communists won the long civil war against the U.S.-backed Nationalist government of Chiang Kai-shek. With more than a decade of time to reflect, Lee understood why this had happened and tried to explicate it:

The truth was difficult for many Americans, now over-glamorizing the Chinese, to accept. For example, during Madame Chiang Kai-shek's triumphant tour of the United States, journalists in China began warning their readers at home that all was not well. They saw and experienced corruption, witnessed the lowering of morale, the suppression of the truth. When their warnings were first cabled to the U.S., the editors refused to publish them. When others wrote volumes in this vein, the China Lobby and Nationalist sympathizers suppressed them. The only voice which at that time could break through was that of Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt...

Considerable disappointment was aroused by General ["Vinegar Joe"] Stilwell's inability to reform the Chinese army ... The downfall of the Nationalist Government brought bitter criticism ... [and] anger against the [Nationalist] Chinese who now had to admit corruption, concentration camps, and other ruthless methods used to oppress the Chinese masses.

The State Department, which could have hugely benefited from Dr. Lee's insight, ignored her—just as it dismissed and vilified longtime China journalist Agnes Smedley and others. Academics in the 1950s were badly abused by right-wing politicians, and Lee preferred her quiet life. Although she lectured to willing audiences, she did not push her views in the halls of power; instead, she retired and remarried. Glenn Glin was a person like herself: an American whose parents came from China, he was a lawyer, and she moved to his

Phoenix home. Lee had to subsidize the 1960 publication of what became her classic book, and she died in Phoenix a mere four years later.

Katherine Ng at the University of California Los Angeles is building a collection on Rose Hum Lee at the UCLA Library.

**See also:** Buck, Pearl; Chiang Kai-shek, Madame; Chinese-American women; Japanese-American women; Pacific Theater of Operations; Pearl Harbor; Red Cross; refugees; Roosevelt, Eleanor; Smedley, Agnes; underutilization

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## LESBIANISM

Homosexuality, either male or female, was a topic undiscussed in the 1940s. Words about it were whispered, if spoken at all, and many women doubtless lived and died without ever taking any personal cognizance of the lesbians in their midst. Lesbians themselves often failed to understand why they seemed different from other women; many married, had children, and never quite grasped why they were unhappy in that role.

The nation had a long history of persecution of homosexuality, which was a death-penalty crime in colonial New England. Three centuries had done little to change that, and in World War II, no employment discrimination legislation existed that even remotely protected a woman whose boss decided that she was a lesbian and therefore undesirable. Indeed, employed lesbians in the civilian economy arguably were at a greater disadvantage than those in the military: the military provided mechanisms whereby an accused woman could defend herself, whereas a woman working in defense industries or any other private employment could be fired for any reason—or none at all.

Nor were lesbians aware of each other or even beginning to organize to fight the routine discrimination against them. Women's fight for justice itself was stalemated, as the Equal Rights Amendment was opposed by most female leaders, and the subset of lesbians within the women's movement was one that even feminists preferred to ignore. Lesbian women, often themselves unwilling to acknowledge their biological proclivities, simply suffered in silence. Although rumors plagued the Women's Army Corps (WAC) from its beginning,

the charge of lesbianism was so taboo that this particular part of spoken gossip rarely made it into print.

Virtually all of the printed slander against the WAC centered instead on illicit heterosexuality, not homosexuality. This defamation of female character, in fact, became so serious a deterrent to WAC recruiting that the FBI ran several investigations to find the original sources of rumors. It finally concluded that Nazis were not behind what seemed to be the systematic slur-spreading: instead it was Americans who created a nymphomaniac image of women in the military, and the fantasizers were heterosexuals. The FBI found rumor mongers to be men telling what they viewed as "traveling salesman" stories or, less often, civilian women jealous of WACs who might be near their (usually drafted) soldier husbands or sweethearts.

The military, too, put its print emphasis on heterosexuality, carefully refusing to raise even the possibility of lesbians in the military in any sort of public way. For example, when army historian Mattie Treadwell published the WAC's official history in 1954, she devoted an entire chapter to "The Slander Campaign" that damaged WAC recruiting—but it was entirely about heterosexual misbehavior (or the possibility thereof). Nowhere did she specifically refer to lesbianism.

The same is true of the vast majority of the many memoirs written by women who were active during World War II. One of the few that acknowledged lesbianism as an issue was WAC Grace Porter Miller—whose *Call of Duty* was not published until 1999. Her motivation for enlisting was akin to that of most women, as she recalled the autumn of 1942:

Worst, of course, were the long lists of U.S. casualties in daily newspapers ... Every family lived with the constant dread of receiving a telegram saying that their loved one was wounded or missing in action or killed ...

So why did I enlist? Was it for the honor? *Definitely not!* Women in uniform were regarded as second-class citizen-soldiers. As one writer ... put it, "They had to endure the wisecracks of their fellow GIs and the derision of civilians who alternately accused them of lesbianism and heterosexual promiscuity."

Miller's conclusion was on target: conservatives could not decide what type of illicit sexuality motivated military women, but critics were confident that these women were guilty of something. Charges were hurled against WACs that never were made against either the Army Nurse Corps or the Navy Nurse Corps, both of which had been in existence for decades prior to World War II. Nor was it fear that close living quarters or work relationships that critics feared would encourage lesbianism; by the 1940s, women had attended single-sex colleges for a century, and the tradition of Catholic nuns was ancient. Instead, the genuine concern of critics was that the WAC—unlike military nurses—would fundamentally challenge the historic power and privilege of men within the military.

With the benefit of six decades of increasingly sophisticated knowledge of biology and sexuality, it can be assumed that the World War II military attracted some women who

were lesbians. The uncommonly candid Miller encountered two. She did not initially recognize the first as such, describing the newcomer to her barracks at Denton, Texas, as “Claudia,”

a thin, dark, mannish woman in her late twenties, from New Jersey, who swaggered in and brusquely started taking over ... Claudia gradually began lying around on Dorothy’s bed ..., giving Dorothy more and more friendly hugs and pats. For a while, neither Dorothy nor I realized what was going on. We were both young and very naive ... I had never come in contact with a lesbian on our ranch in Montana or as a teacher in Iowa—I hardly knew what the word meant ...

Suddenly, Dorothy *knew*. We tried to talk about it without naming it ... We were too shocked and embarrassed to talk to anyone ... It is hard to say what the next step would have been, [but] then ... the army finally decided to change [the corps from its auxiliary status], and anyone who wanted to stay in had to reenlist ... I signed up for the duration, but because of Claudia, Dorothy chose to go home. She had been enthusiastic about the army ... but this was a fast, easy way out of an uncomfortable situation ...

Over the years since then, I have known other women who prefer women ... but never again have I met one so pushy and rude as Claudia. She was a sexual predator ... WACs often had to repulse male sexual predators, but we expected them and were prepared to deal with them. We were unprepared to deal with predators who were female ...

After my traumatic experience with Claudia at Denton, I was much faster in recognizing the second lesbian I met in the service ... Joan, the corporal in charge [at San Diego], was very mannish in appearance, lean, with short straight hair, and a deep voice. Although she was not so aggressive as Claudia had been, she did her best to entice one or another of the girls in the barracks to spend time in her room ... We all quietly agreed to leave her alone as much as possible.

Sexual harassment, of course, is far different from consensual same-sex relationships, but such gender complexities still remain unfathomable to much of the public. In a personal memo to the author, contemporary military historian Judith Bellafaire agrees that lesbians doubtless were part of the World War II military, just as they were part of the population—but in accordance with the era’s sexual taboos, the military intended to prevent lesbians from enlisting:

The WAC leadership was very concerned about the issue. They tried hard to devise questions for interviewers of potential recruits that would enable them to screen out the women with lesbian proclivities—and also put into place regulations that enabled them to discharge these women whenever they were discovered. At least two WAC officers, one of whom was Captain Ruby Herman, were given the unenviable assignment of traveling to bases around the country and conducting official investigations of accused lesbians, and then discharging the women they determined actually were gay ... This happened during a time when many young women ... had never heard of lesbians and didn’t understand ... until it was explained to them. Thus there were numerous false allegations.

One was by a Wisconsin mother whose daughter was at the WAC training center of Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia in 1944. The mother wrote a letter to the War Department, saying that “women are afraid to enlist” because the WAC was “full of homosexuals and sex maniacs.” Worried about recruitment and agreeing with the era’s psychologists that lesbianism was a mental disorder, the Army conducted a thorough investigation. Six officers (four of them female) traveled to eleven sites to take depositions. Some of the testimony was quite graphic, but in the end only four couples could be identified as active lesbians. Some agreed to psychiatric treatment; others chose to resign. While these eight women suffered serious career and emotional turmoil, when the mother who began the inquiry was informed of the expensive investigation, according to author Emily Yellin, she dismissed her original letter with, “I would take back what I wrote ... I was angry.”

The Navy’s WAVES, the Coast Guard’s SPARS, and Women Marines suffered fewer allegations than the WAC, probably because the WAC, which was formed first, set all precedents. A second important factor was that the naval branches were not allowed to go overseas and thus were subject to fewer fantasies based on remoteness. When all of these wartime units began folding into the regular military with the 1948 Women’s Armed Services Integration Act, rumors of lesbianism expanded along with overseas assignments and the “unfeminine” choice of the military as a peacetime profession.

A very few women have added to that reputation, including Johnnie Phelps, who wrote a brief entry on her alleged experience during World War II and the immediate postwar era in *My Country, My Right to Serve* (1991). Phelps said that “95 percent” of her WAC colleagues in occupied Germany were lesbians—but because she made many major factual errors in recounting WAC history, this claim also becomes dubious. Moreover, she was the only woman among a dozen gay men who wrote about this era, a dearth that further lessens the believability of such a large lesbian presence. Nor did the military turn a blind eye to same-sex romance in the way that Phelps suggests; instead, suspected lesbians were subject to court martial and dishonorable discharge.

Throughout the Korean War of the 1950s, the Vietnam War of the 1960s and 1970s, and on through the Reagan era of the 1980s, the military routinely denounced rumors of lesbianism as “slander,” while assiduously ignoring both the civil rights and organizational assets of its homosexual members. The issue finally began to be publicly addressed with the gay revolution of the late 1970s, but no military officials took action until 1993, when President Bill Clinton forced the Pentagon to pay attention with his “don’t ask, don’t tell” policy. From the American Revolution onward, however, it doubtless is true that large numbers of lesbian women have patriotically served their country, while also enduring profound personal discrimination.

*See also:* Army Nurse Corps; courtship; divorce; marriage; Navy Nurse Corps; occupied Germany; recruit-



**ment; sexual harassment; SPARS; WAVES; Women Marines; Women's Armed Services Integration Act; Women's Army Corps**

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**LETTER WRITING**

Nothing was more important to soldiers in World War II than getting letters from home. In an era prior to easy phone calls and e-mail, communication was difficult and therefore much more meaningful. The government understood the mail was key to morale, and it strongly encouraged civilians (most of them women) to write to the millions of troops and sailors (most of them men) who were drafted to serve their country. These letters were prized so much that despite the hazards of frequent movement in the military, many were preserved and can be read today, both in book collections and in archives across the country.

Peer pressure also was an important factor. The military did mail call in a very open way, with troops assembled when mailbags were received—so anyone could see how much mail anyone else got and make assumptions about how popular a person was in his or her civilian life. It was both hurtful and embarrassing not to get mail when one's peers did, so much so that one soldier told author Ethel Gorham letters were “the best hold the girls have on us. You want to be as nice as you can to them when you're out on leave so you can get them to write to you.” To be lined up for mail call and receive nothing was a public humiliation, a notification to a man's peers that no one cared about him.

The same was true for women in the military. In archives at the University of Central Arkansas, Linnie Jeffries, a member of the Navy Nurse Corps, spelled it out: “Mail time meant a lot to all of us. We spent many hours each month writing letters —so we could receive something at mail call.” Selene Wiese, who served with the Women's Army Corps (WAC) in the Pacific Theater of Operations (PTO), noted in 1944:

The mail just came in and all six of us [tent-mates] got some. We had a fine good time reading choice tidbits aloud. Some of the families' reactions to letters from here are nothing short of phenomenal. Jean's mother wanted to know if our

first stop here was a rest haven for rest and adjustment. That one brought howls.

By 1944, the military had created a vast delivery system, with letters addressed to just two overseas locations: because it was important to maintain secrecy about what fronts would be where, envelopes from the United States were addressed to the individual, with his rank and service unit numbers, and then either “APO San Francisco” for the Pacific Theater or “APO New York” for the European. The abbreviation stood for “Army Post Office,” but those two offices also delivered mail for the naval branches. Postage was kept at Depression-level prices to encourage people to write and to send parcels, especially of homemade food. Mail from overseas for U.S. was free; soldiers in combat conditions could hardly be expected to buy stamps.

Finding time and especially a place to write were the biggest problems of women overseas. Wiese, for example, explained to her mother that “in Oro Bay [New Guinea], the only place we had electricity was in the orderly room, latrines, and mess hall.” This meant that “when it got dark about 5 in winter,” the sole unrestricted area with sufficient light to read or write was the latrine. An occupant had to leave, of course, when someone arrived who wanted to use the facility for its genuine purpose.

People back home had more comfortable writing conditions, but finding time to write a longhand letter could be a serious problem, especially if a woman also had a paid job. Emma Van Coutren, for instance, lived in suburban New York City and worked as a sales clerk; she spent virtually all of her non-work time writing letters to her ten children in the military. She had three daughters in the WAC, one



African-American women in Australia at mail call. *Courtesy of National Archives*

of whom was in North Africa by Christmas of 1943, while the seven sons were literally around the globe, from Iceland to the South Pacific. The youngest, Private Helen Van Coutren, was stationed in Conway, Arkansas, and said of her mother: "She has been the dispensing officer for us and sees that we all get the news from one another as letters pour to her."

For some, the problem was not time but ability. People who were parents of young adults in the 1940 had themselves been educated prior to the 1920s, when high-school graduation was the exception, not the rule. Many women doubtless felt uncomfortable putting pen to paper and thus demonstrating their semi-literacy compared with that of their children. The era in which these mothers grew up, prior to World War I, also was one of massive immigration, and English was not necessarily their first language. Author Deborah Dash Moore, for example, wrote of mothers "often more comfortable in Yiddish than English" who had to have help composing letters to "sons who rarely knew how to write Yiddish." She cited Herbert Walters, a lawyer who "hadn't thought that the written word would be a problem. Since his youngest sister still lived at home, he addressed all his letters to 'Mom, Dad, and Naomi.' Naomi was the one who replied. His mother couldn't write English, and although his father knew English, he did not take up the task of writing letters."

That was perfectly typical. Letter writing was assumed to be a woman's job, and virtually all of the many wartime admonitions to write were addressed to women. Posters, magazines, and other advertising reinforced the point of how important it was, and women took this obligation to heart: already a year prior to D-Day, twenty million pieces of mail (including print media and parcels) went overseas each week. "Mail is so important to troops," *Time* reported, that "a shipment is included on every ship and available plane."

Women who were overseas often took on the task of writing for male colleagues. Countless WACs volunteered their off-duty time at military hospitals, writing letters for men physically incapable of doing so. Such women also felt a special obligation to write to men they had met in non-combat conditions when soldiers moved on to battle. WAC Grace Miller cited a Tennessee man she had dated in England; to her it was a casual relationship, but to him, it was serious:

His unit was one of the first to go ashore on D-day, and ... Delbert wrote to me whenever there was a lull. I answered his letters, but my answers were not as frequent as his letters, and I was never sure how often he received the ones I did write.

The last time I heard from Delbert, his letter arrived in a dirty envelope. A penciled note was scrawled on a tag-end of note paper. "I'm writing to you from a muddy foxhole ... We lost a lot of men already ... I want you to remember I love you ... Don't forget me. I love you. Please write. Love, Delbert."

The same week that I got this letter, news came of terrible fighting ... during the battle of the Bulge ... That was where Delbert's unit was located ...

I answered his letter, but I doubt that he ever received it. I never heard from him again. For years afterward, I felt guilty about not writing to him more often.

Letters failed to arrive despite the major resources that the military put into its delivery system. Initial plans had called for many WACs to be assigned to sorting mail, but those women who volunteered proved to have so many other valuable skills that relatively few ended up in this MOS, or military occupational specialty. Some who did, however, demonstrated exceptional ability. The 6888th Central Postal Directory Battalion was an African-American unit that set records at delivering letters to the seven million troops in the European Theater of Operation. It was commanded by Charity Adams, the highest-ranked black woman in World War II.

Just as there never were enough women to fill mail-sorting MOS slots, there also were never enough to handle all of the censorship chores that had to be done. Every letter going to or from overseas locations was read by military censors, and comments were stricken that might prove helpful to an enemy if the letter went astray. Dozens of magazine articles warned women that "the censor reads your letter," while service personnel overseas were keenly aware that they should not provide details that could turn out to be important to spies. Letters did go astray in the chaos of war; ships did go down with mailbags aboard; and in fact, much of what Allied military intelligence knew about enemy strength was learned from documents obtained in those ways, especially in the PTO. Along with one hundred and twenty WACs, the Allied Translator and Intelligence Service also employed several hundred civilian women for PTO letter-censoring. This group, according to WAC historian Mattie Treadwell, received the Meritorious Service Unit Plaque for its work, which required "knowledge of 31 languages." These women also dealt with "approximately a million wrongly addressed pieces of mail ... monthly."

Combat life truly could be hell, especially in Pacific jungles, and many men developed psychological problems that revealed themselves in letters. Treadwell said that some WACs developed stress from repeated reading of such letters, with their gory descriptions of battle and heartbreaking emotional pain. One South Pacific officer, Captain Jeane Letallier, reported that "much of what the men wrote was so obscene that the women became demoralized from having to read it all day ... WAC censors ... first thought they would lose their eyesight, then their minds." Lieutenant Colonel Mera Galloway even recommended that in "any future planning, I would definitely oppose the use of women in censoring male correspondence."

The content of a letter, however, arguably could be less important than merely getting one. Because mail from remote places was slow to arrive—or never arrived at all—people on both sides of an ocean could easily misinterpret the other's feelings. A man overseas could reasonably conclude that his sweetheart had forgotten him and was dating others; a woman at home might have what seemed good reason to feel



Christmas mail call brings smiles to 91st Evacuation Hospital Army nurses, the Netherlands, December 1944. *Courtesy of Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

the same. Even if relationships were strong enough to endure lapses in the mail, any disruption of the pattern caused those at home to fear the worst. Nell Giles, for instance, wrote late in 1942 of her defense-industry colleagues:

If a girl doesn't hear from her man overseas for a long time, the whole factory knows about it. She is comforted by the other girls and is even offered their own letters to read, if that will help. One girl, who hadn't had a letter since March, suddenly got one the other day. The news spread like a war extra. The girl who told me about it didn't even know the "war widow's" name—she was just "the girl who hadn't heard since March."

Or it could be a woman who was overseas and worried that her family was worried about her. Agnes Jensen (later Mangerich) was a member of the Army Nurse Corps (ANC) who, with a dozen other nurses, crashed landed in German-occupied Albania on November 8, 1943. When, on November 30, the survivors finally were able to get word to the Allies that they were alive, one of Jensen's first thoughts was about mail and her family. "The letter I wrote before we left [Sicily] is probably just arriving," she thought. "At least my parents won't have to go through weeks of worry about what has happened."

Sometimes groups such as this bonded so thoroughly that they adopted each other's families as additional correspon-

dents. Deborah Dash Moore cited a plane crash involving a Jewish man with whom Ralph Jackson had gone to a Seder in the ETO. On his own initiative, Jackson contacted the Red Cross for details and then cabled his wife, Rita Jackson, so that she could let the associated families know that their men had survived. A real network had evolved between these civilians who were bound together by common fear for their loved ones.

Because it was reasonable to believe that not all letters would arrive, many women in America, especially wives of servicemen, wrote everyday. The case of Margaret Wilder, who had several children, shows how hard it could be to find the right tone for daily letters. She had made it clear how much she missed her husband in her very first one, saying that "it wasn't till I picked up the shirt you'd worn this morning" that she broke down; she feared the future would be "unbearable." She knew, though, that media morale-boosters strongly disapproved of such sentences; they insisted that women keep up a constant patter of positives. When Wilder did this, however, she soon had to explain:

No, my darling, we're not "having a gay time." ... I just wanted you to let you think of us as busy and more self-sufficient so you wouldn't worry ... Sometimes I've felt like a magpie, sorting over the news till I found a shiny bead or two to send you. And I get so tired of being a magpie ... especially as I often felt like the droopiest of crows.

The result, of course, was a great deal of minutia of daily life in daily letters, and women fretted about that, too. A letter-to-the-editor in *Parents* is an example: the writer said that she followed media advice to include "all the small ties" in letters to her son—yet compared with his letters full of daily death and danger, she feared that her recitations of "when we laid the linoleum, when the cat had her kittens, and the day that the tractor got stuck" seemed petty and parochial. Margaret Wilder, too, began to fear that her letters bored her husband and even perhaps that he was glad to be away from the daily trials of his young children. Personalities changed with the experience of war, and sometimes women felt they were writing to near-strangers. Wilder once responded to a letter by saying, "it's one of the few I've had from *you*, not from that somewhat frightening lieutenant who's been writing to us lately."

But even if the content of a letter felt strange or was trivial, merely receiving it was meaningful to its recipient—and also to historians, who can find answers to all sorts of questions in these records of everyday life. Women wrote, for example, of such simple pleasures as eating pork chops, which they viewed as a treat under wartime food rationing. They spoke of conditions in the defense plants where they worked, of crowded public transportation, of holidays much more grim than those in the past. In dozens of ways, their letters reveal the reality of war.

Among the collections that have been published recently are the letters of WAC officer Betty Bandel, *An Officer and a Lady* (2004). She wrote primarily to her mother, but letters



in *A Chance for Love* (1998) are between Marian Smith and Eugene Peterson, who would marry at the war's end. Mary Jane Kohlenberg's *Hospital on the Move* (2000) is a similar record of a nurse and her physician husband. Several books have resulted from the letter-collecting work of Professors Judy Barrett Litoff and David C. Smith. All of these sources and more offer an especially intimate understanding of Americans caught up in World War II.

*See also:* **Adams, Charity; advertising; African-American women; Army Nurse Corps; censorship; courtship; defense industries; draft; European Theater of Operations; intelligence, military; Jensen, Agnes; magazines; military occupational specialty; marriage; Navy Nurse Corps; Pacific Theater of Operations; rationing; travel; Women's Army Corps; wives of servicemen**

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### "LINK LADIES"

"Link Ladies" were women who specialized in teaching basic aspects of instrument flight to young men intent on becoming pilots.

This often had to start with fundamentals that modern people learn through ordinary life, but it is important to remember that in World War II, many Americans never had flown or even seen the interior of a plane. One example of the era's level of knowledge is revealed by a *Time* report that the Navy's WAVES were becoming air traffic controllers—but first *Time* felt it necessary to explain to readers what an air traffic controller was. "Link training instructor" did not become a permanent part of the language in the way that "air traffic controller" did, but the term was part of World War II nomenclature. Because it usually was women who did this work, "Link lady" evolved for the occupation.

The "Link" portion of the phrase was for the flight simulator's inventor, Edwin Link of Binghamton, New York. He built the first such in the late 1920s, selling them to amusement parks and arcades as entertainment: children sat in the faux airplane, moved dials and levers, and pretended they were flying. By the late 1930s, however, the educational value of Link's invention became clear: in fact, he sold his first serious ones to the Japanese for use in training their pilots. After Japan attacked Hawaii's Pearl Harbor—destroying many planes, as well as ships—the nation would need many more pilots than there were planes available on which to train them. The Link flight simulator was the answer. Sophisticated enough to be considered a precursor of today's "virtual reality" mechanisms, it gave a student pilot a genuine feel for flight under different weather conditions.

The new job of Link instruction did not go to women because of any personal familiarity with aircraft, but instead because women long have been seen as natural teachers. The Army immediately grasped that possibility: the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps formed in July 1942, and according to historian Mattie Treadwell, already by November:

AAF [Army Air Force] headquarters had proposed the use of Waacs in this work, since "Men suitable to act as such

instructors are rapidly disappearing into officer candidate schools." Men qualified to do the work often were pilots or potential pilots themselves, and were not content to remain as...instructors ... Waacs selected by local [AAF] authorities were therefore trained in the men's training school for Link trainer instructors, and others learned the work on the job. The duties proved both successful and satisfying to the women.

The Navy did the same in even greater numbers, as it assigned college-educated WAVES to this military occupational speciality (MOS). After completing basic training, WAVES took a ten-week course to learn the rudiments of instrument flight and then became instructors to (usually younger) men. The Navy, according to *Flying*, looked for women for this work who had "a personality that will enable them to teach a class composed entirely of men. Such WAVES are not resented by male cadets," the magazine continued, "provided they know their field thoroughly and are able to hold the interest of the class."

From the classroom, students moved to individual work in the Link trainer, which resembled a plane's fuselage. The student sat inside the flight simulator, while the "Link Lady" put him through his paces in learning how to handle instruments for take-off, landing, and more. In a typical situation, the "Link Lady" sat at a desk about fifteen feet from the simulator, with the practicing pilot about six feet higher than her head. Both were in uniform and both wore headphones to ape the radio communication of real planes. Because both the Army and the Navy had flight schools all over the country, "Link Ladies" worked in many places. A few civilian women also had run flight schools prior to the war, and some of them continued in this work when civilians were banned from flying to save fuel for the military. Most women worked at airfields in the South, where snow and ice were rare, and flat land enabled easier teaching and learning.

Women could teach, but only rarely could they move beyond that to actual aviation: the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) was controversial from its beginning, and Congress, in fact, disbanded it before the war ended. In the view of most people, wartime need might justify allowing women to teach aviation to men, but it was not yet acceptable for female pilots to be part of actual air corps.

Even having adult females instruct adult males—and therefore hold authority over them—was innovative. The exigencies of war, however, seemed to make it surprisingly acceptable. Perhaps because top military officials did not disagree about "Link Ladies" in the way that they did about WASPs, almost no negative press went to this change in the status of women. A comment in *Scholastic* magazine well summarized the wartime attitude: "A woman taught me to walk," said one Navy cadet, "why shouldn't a woman teach me to fly?"

*See also:* aircraft workers; Air WACs; Civil Air Patrol; Military Occupational Speciality; rationing; teachers;



Sergeant Rita Schwarz, Private First Class Jeanette Walker, and Private First Class June L. Russell, all members of the Women's Marines, in a Link trainer fuselage at the Marine Corps Air Station in Cherry Point, North Carolina, 1944. *Courtesy of the U.S. Marine Corps*

## WAVES; Women's Airforce Service Pilots; Women's Army Corps

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## LITTLE CHURCH AROUND THE CORNER

Soldiers and sailors bound for either the early North African front or the later European Theater of Operations usually shipped out from New York or New Jersey—and as a result, many hurried wartime weddings took place there. "The Little Church Around the Corner," already a legendary setting for romantic weddings when the war began, was the setting for numerous wartime ceremonies. According to *Newsweek*, some two thousand weddings were performed there during the first two years of the war. Most ceremonies were between a man who was about to risk his life overseas and a woman

who most likely would travel hundreds or even thousands of miles back home. They were planned through letters, telegrams, and expensive long-distance phone calls.

Such weddings were not the lavish scenes of the church's past, and instead usually were starkly plain, followed by a "honeymoon" of just a night or two. Men wore uniforms and women often a simple business suit, with a corsage as the only indication of the day's specialness. Many wartime brides gave up accoutrements their mothers considered essential; many had no friend nearby to be their maid-of-honor; and official witnesses on marriage license often were strangers. Yet while the media endlessly debated the wisdom of such hurried marriages—and the military definitely, but vainly, opposed them—thousands took place in this church alone. As sociologist Gladys Gaylord observed, these young couples "see essential values more quickly than the older generation, who are only aware that their standards of living are being swept away."

The wartime rector of "The Little Church" was Randolph Ray, who also was well known as a marital expert. Although he performed several wedding ceremonies a day, Ray joined those in the popular press who warned against too-hasty marriages. He insisted on getting to know potential brides and grooms well enough to satisfy himself that the marriage had a genuine chance of success: at the same time that *Newsweek* reported that he had wed two thousand couples, Ray also had refused to sanction another five hundred. Those couples either did not wed or, more likely, had a civil ceremony instead of a church one. Despite its longtime liberalism, "The Little Church" would not offer its sanctuary to couples who seemed less than committed to each other.

Officially called "The Church of the Transfiguration," the Episcopalian parish remains at One East 29th Street, between Fifth Avenue and Madison Avenue. The building dates to 1849, when this location was considered outside the city, and its members broke federal law to shelter escaped slaves there in the 1850s. "The Little Church" also has a long history of association with nearby Broadway theaters: the name, in fact, arose when a dying actor said he wanted his funeral at "the little church around the corner, where they do that sort of thing."

**See also:** courtship; divorce; European Theater of Operations; marriage; North Africa; travel; wives of servicemen

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### LOVE, NANCY HARKNESS (1914–1976)

Nancy Harkness Love headed the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS) during World War II. She did not get as much World War II publicity as her colleague Jacqueline Cochran, but both were veteran pilots who founded military aviation cadres that significantly raised the status of American women.

Born on Valentine's Day in Houghton, Michigan, Nancy Harkness was the daughter of a physician affluent enough to give her flying lessons at age sixteen and to send her to elite Vassar College during the Great Depression. She earned her commercial license in 1933 and creatively began flying passengers from Vassar's town of Poughkeepsie to larger New York area airports. In 1935, she left college and worked on one of the most innovative of the federal government's New Deal projects: under the aegis of the Works Progress Administration, she and a few other women were hired to map air hazards such as water towers.

The next year, at age twenty, Nancy Harkness married Robert M. Love, who had learned to fly in the army. Living in Boston, they followed up on her Poughkeepsie business model by creating Inter City Aviation. They also were distributors for Beech Aircraft—in which Olive Ann Beech partnered with her husband; Blanche Hill of this company, which later became Northrop Aircraft Corporation, was another such pioneer aviation businesswoman. All of these were greatly affected by the 1939 outbreak of war in Europe, which tremendously increased the need for planes.

The U.S. government encouraged manufacturers to sell aircraft and other war materiel to Britain, but American neutrality rules mandated that military planes could not be transported over the Atlantic, where German forces might well shoot them down. In response, Nancy Love joined other New England women who "ferried," or delivered, planes to the Canadian border, and Canadian pilots then flew them on to Europe. A few American women went further and joined the British Air Transport Authority, flying for embattled Britain—which, by 1941, stood alone against the whole of Nazi-occupied Europe.

That was dangerous, but even the sort of ferrying within the United States that Love did involved some risk. Newly-manufactured planes were prone to undetected mechanical problems, and the weather near Canada often was icy and foggy—a truly perilous situation prior to reliable instruments. Women also ferried a number of different types of planes, which required a range of skills. They did this as individuals, however, while trying to persuade their government to create a systematic way in which they could contribute their skills to the fight for democracy. They were consistently rebuffed. Historian Kathleen Boom quoted the top prewar official of the Army Air Force [AAF] as calling the idea "utterly unfeasible," but women persisted.





Major General Harold L. George congratulates Nancy Harkness Love on her appointment as director of the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron (WAFS). While the U.S. still was neutral, she and other women flew planes to the border of Canada; Canadian pilots then took them on to embattled Britain. *Courtesy of the National Archives*

The Women Flyers of America, according to author Russell Birdwell, “badgered the authorities in Washington” to allow them to help.

The fact that Nancy Harkness Love was able to announce the formation of the WAFS in September of 1942 was due in large part to the fact that she was married to an AAF official. Robert Love held the rank of major in the reserves, and with the outbreak of the war, was called to active duty in Washington, D.C. Nancy Love soon found a civilian job with the Air Transport Command (ATC) and actually commuted by plane between her Washington home and Baltimore office. Because male authorities knew her personally, they were less frightened by stereotypes and more aware of the genuine skills that she and other women possessed.

It was Colonel William Tunner, Robert Love's immediate superior, who was primarily responsible for launching the WAFS without an internal War Department debate: he simply valued the abilities of Nancy Love's capable friends and authorized her to set up a mechanism that allowed them to ferry new planes from factories to army air bases. Both *Time* and *Newsweek* wrote about the WAFS for their September 21, 1942, editions, the very week that it was formed. There was surprisingly little negative response, perhaps because of the paramilitary nature of the innovation.

“Mrs. Love,” as she was called, remained a civilian, but at age twenty-eight, she commanded the forty highly-qualified pilots who joined the squadron. She worked primarily at New Castle Army Airfield near Wilmington, Delaware, but also frequently flew to other WAFS stations, especially at Long Beach, California, and Romulus, Michigan. Dallas,

where Love Field was named for a pilot killed in 1913, was another major destination for WAFS. All were near aircraft manufacturing plants for efficiency in moving newly-built planes to where they were needed.

In Houston meanwhile, superstar aviator Jackie Cochran was forming Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP), which accepted less-skilled female pilots for training at Texas's Avenger Field. Love and Cochran supported each other's efforts, at least initially, but as duties expanded beyond ferrying, General Harry “Hap” Arnold, the AAF chief, ordered that the two merge into one—and Cochran became director of that one, called the WASP.

With her WAFS disbanded, Love returned to the ATC, where she held the title of chief executive of the Ferrying Division. She got out of the office to fly, however, and earned several aviation records. Love was the first woman to deliver a C-47 and a C-54 (cargo planes) and to fly a B-25 (bomber) coast-to-coast, which she delivered in record time. She also flew the PT-39, a pursuit plane so tricky to maneuver that male pilots had labeled it the “flying coffin.”

At the war's end, Nancy and Robert Love had the unique distinction of both being decorated with the Air Medal. Unlike other women who headed military units during the war, she became a wife and mother, never again working professionally. The Loves lived on Martha's Vineyard, where they reared three daughters. In the 1970s, when the women's movement revived, she helped with the issue of granting belated benefits to WASPs, but did not live to see the final victory. Congress passed the legislation in 1979, three years after Nancy Harkness Love died of cancer.

*See also:* **aircraft workers; Air WACs; Avenger Field; British women; Civil Air Patrol; Cochran, Jacqueline; decorations; WASP**

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## LUCE, CLARE BOOTHE (1903–1987)

A celebrity during much of the twentieth century, Clare Boothe Luce was both a writer and a public official; she served in Congress during World War II. Her abilities, however, often were dismissed by those who suspected that the widespread recognition she received was due to her husband, Time-Life publishing tycoon Henry B. Luce.

A native New Yorker, Anne Clare Boothe attended fashionable private schools and served as a social secretary to multimillionaire (but feminist) Alva Vanderbilt Belmont. Boothe married a millionaire in 1923 and bore a daughter the following year, but after six years of the socialite life, with vacuous summers at Newport and winters in the city, she obtained a divorce from her increasingly alcoholic older husband in 1929.

Returning to her maiden name, she worked for Conde Nast Publications, writing and editing for *Vogue* and *Vanity Fair*—whose readers were wealthy enough to continue their lifestyles despite the Great Depression. Her first book, *Stuffed Shirts* (1931), further displayed a witty mixture of cynicism and savior faire; Eleanor Roosevelt described the book as “a series of satirical sketches on society leaders.” Roosevelt went on to say that “Clare Boothe Brokow” was popular at Conde Nast: “women who had business with her ... found her to be a very satisfactory editor, reasonable and dependable. The secretaries and stenographers liked her, said she was friendly and democratic.”

That image changed after her 1935 marriage and especially after her 1936 play, *The Women*. It received appreciable critical acclaim and has been staged many times since—but women often agreed with Roosevelt, who said that it portrayed them as “venomous,” with a cast of characters “in which the only moderately nice woman is the least interesting.” Other plays followed, the most popular of which was *Kiss the Boys Goodbye* (1938). Then and later, Clare Boothe Luce also was either the subject or the author of scores of magazine articles, especially those published by the Luce corporation.

As the Continent headed into World War II, she wrote a non-fiction work, *Europe in the Spring* (1940), and with U.S. entrance into the war, Luce successfully ran for Congress in 1942. Her district was a perfect fit: she represented a wealthy Connecticut area previously represented by her stepfather. A Republican, she joined that small minority in Congress, and party leaders were quick to promote such a well-publicized member. She was assigned a seat on the powerful Military Affairs Committee and spoke at the 1944 national convention, when Republicans nominated New York’s Thomas Dewey. Luce insisted that her speech be in the evening, when it would attract the largest radio audience, and Democrats responded with Representative Helen Gahagan Douglas, who spoke for incumbent New Yorker Franklin Roosevelt at their convention. Women have made prime-time speeches at national party conventions ever since.

Luce easily won her 1944 reelection, but in 1946, she disappeared from Congress as quickly as she had risen:



Congresswoman Clare Boothe Luce talks with China’s Madame Chiang Kai-shek. The pantsuit that Luce wears was extremely unusual. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

depressed by the death of her daughter in a car accident two years earlier, she chose not to run in what would have been her first postwar campaign. A second factor may have been a well-publicized feud with fellow writer Dorothy Thompson that began with the 1940 election, when Thompson supported President Roosevelt, while Luce worked for the loser, Wendell Wilkie. Nor was Thompson alone in her open distaste for Luce; other female journalists also considered her self-absorbed and unsupportive of women.

She did, however, get along with her female colleagues in Congress. Although her four years in the House was not long enough to establish a genuine record, Luce worked well with Democrat Mary T. Norton and others who were little recognized by the public but nonetheless powerful. To be sure, the truly tough votes on women’s issues had been taken in 1942, before Luce was elected, when Edith Nourse Rogers led the admission of women into the regular army; Margaret Chase Smith sponsored the Navy’s WAVES; and Frances Bolton took the lead on all issues concerning nurses. Luce’s strongest feminist effort in Congress was to push for more appointments of women to top offices. Although this may have been influenced by the opportunity that it gave her to criticize the Democratic White House, she nonetheless was right to point out that dozens of wartime agencies underutilized women’s abilities. From ration boards to draft

boards, countless men made decisions that directly affected women's lives without input from any woman.

Like her congressional colleague Frances Bolton, Luce also visited the European Theater of Operations as soon as civilians were allowed to do that. As the only female member of her touring group, she understandably attracted more than routine press attention, and some male colleagues were openly jealous. Luce also took time during these congressional years to write such articles as "Victory Is A Woman," in which she risked offending fellow Republicans. Never any friend to unions, she nonetheless said of the nation's labor-force crisis:

Many a woman who squawks to her neighbors about the Afeather bedding" in labor unions is herself living a feather-bed life ... There need perhaps be no...large-scale conscription of fathers if all the nieces of Uncle Sam would do their duty as well as the women of Russia and China and Great Britain have done theirs.

During the Truman administration, Luce published *The Twilight of God* (1949) and *Saints for Now* (1952), and then returned to political life when the Republicans returned to the White House in 1953. President Dwight Eisenhower named her ambassador to Italy, a major diplomatic milestone for women. Roosevelt had set this precinct by sending Ruth Bryan Owen to Denmark and Daisy Harriman to Norway, but Luce's appointment was the first to a non-Scandinavian nation. She served in Italy three years, retiring in 1956, and in 1959, Eisenhower again chose her as ambassador to Brazil—but Luce resigned only a month after winning a bitter senatorial confirmation fight.

The Senate was reluctant to confirm her because Luce, who had always represented upper-class interests, grew even more conservative as she aged. Especially after converting to Catholicism in 1946, the early feminist views she had displayed were replaced with right-wing dogma that many senators and women's organizations found objectionable. Although she won confirmation, she did not move to Brazil: instead, Luce went west. She returned to public life in 1964, seconding the nomination of conservative Republican Barry Goldwater, who again lost in a landslide to incumbent Democrat Lyndon Johnson. Goldwater was an Arizonian, and the Luces lived in Phoenix when Henry died in 1967.

His widow moved on to Hawaii, and with the revival of the women's movement in the late 1960s, rediscovered some of the views she held in the 1930s: she wrote a feminist play, *Slam the Door Softly* (1971), which was staged in Los Angeles. Her political opinions, however, remained sufficiently conservative that Ronald Reagan appointed her to his Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board and further honored her with the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1983. The recipient of several honorary degrees and journalism awards, Clare Boothe Luce died at eighty-four in Washington, D.C.

*See also:* **bestsellers; Bolton, Frances; decorations; Douglas, Helen Gahagan; draft; drama; European Theater of**

**Operations; Harriman, Daisy; labor force; magazines; Norton, Mary T.; rationing; Rogers, Edith Nourse; Smith, Margaret Chase; Thompson, Dorothy; underutilization; unions**

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### LUTZ, ALMA (1890–1973)

Alma Lutz was an influential writer on women's issues during the mid-twentieth century, including the period of World War II.

After graduating from prestigious Vassar College in 1912, she became associated with young New York women who were leaders in both history and politics: led by Mary Beard, this group not only helped energize the era's suffrage movement, but also took the initiative on rewriting American history to include women. Although Beard is most famous today, she then was firmly in the shadow of her husband, Columbia University historian Charles Beard. Alma Lutz, however, never married and was the better-known woman in her lifetime, especially during World War II.

These New Yorkers were active in the National Woman's Party that began to emerge in 1913, led by Alice Paul. Alma Lutz wrote political pieces for the party, but really came into her own as a writer after the vote was won. Her first book, a biography of pioneer educator Emma Willard, was published in 1929, and others on women followed. In the year prior to U.S. entrance into World War II, she issued *Created Equal* (1940), a biography of Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and followed that up with a book on Stanton's daughter, Harriot Stanton Blatch.

During World War II, Lutz joined many other female journalists in filling the era's newspapers and magazines with articles on women's new roles. She was one of the few to pay particular attention to the problems of female veterans, publishing a piece on that for the *Christian Science Monitor* in the month after the war ended. Her insight into women in



the postwar world continued with another essay for the same publication the next year. In “Woman’s Hour,” Lutz returned to the imperative of knowing women’s history to grapple successfully with contemporary issues. Although millions of women had learned things during the war that they vaguely wanted to put into political action—especially for postwar peace—they lacked any recognition of the wheels that their mothers and grandmothers had invented. Just twenty-six years after the vote was won, Lutz reported:

I have been asking young women questions about their own history, the history of women ... I found they took their opportunities for granted, that they had no idea of the long, hard struggle for woman suffrage. A few were surprised that women had not always voted ... Most knew only the names of a few of the great women of the past.

Also during the war, Lutz may have been the first to compile a collection of letters written by women who served overseas, which was published as *With Love, Jane: Letters from American Women on the War Front* (1945). It came out, however, just as people were trying to forget the horrors of combat, and as the media was re-creating women’s ideal image as happy postwar homemakers and mothers of the baby boom. It drew less attention than her other books and is difficult to find today.

Lutz returned to history, publishing a biography of Susan B. Anthony in 1959, when Susan B. Anthony II—who also wrote a book on women’s wartime roles—still was alive. A decade later, Lutz pioneered a new academic field with *Crusade for Freedom: Women of the Anti-Slavery Movement* (1968). The subject was one that the era’s historians did not yet recognize: although Lutz thoroughly researched her work, she never had an academic home and preferred writing in a style that appealed to lay readers, especially women.

Like other Woman’s Party members, Lutz worked for the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA). She gave the issue particular attention in the 1940s, when she led similarly-minded Massachusetts women. Her Vassar classmate Margaret Culkin Banning wrote a book on women’s new wartime roles, and another friend, Emily Greene Balch, won the Nobel Peace Prize at the war’s end. None of that was enough to move the ERA forward, however, and Lutz concluded that the best way to ensure women’s collective future was to educate them on their past. She served on the board that developed the outstanding resources now available at Schlesinger Library under the aegis of Harvard’s female associate, Radcliffe College.

Alma Lutz died in Massachusetts at age eighty-three. Her papers are preserved both at Schlesinger and in the Sophia Smith Collection of Smith College, also in Massachusetts.

**See also:** best sellers; colleges; demobilization; Equal Rights Amendment; housework; letter writing; magazines; postwar, veterans

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## **MAASDAM**

This Dutch ship, with American women onboard, was torpedoed by Germany on June 27, 1941, about six months before the United States entered the war. Although these women were almost totally unrecognized, both then and now, they were among the first Americans to risk their lives in the fight against fascism.

The ship had eluded capture when Germany conquered Holland in the spring of 1940. Like most Dutch people, its crew loathed the Nazi philosophy that Germany had accepted under Adolf Hitler, and the *Maasdam* sailed under the British flag, helping that nation with its tremendous need for both civilian and military goods. Nazis did not care, however, whether a ship was a military one or part of the unarmed merchant marine: if it carried the flag of an enemy nation, it was a target.

By June of 1941, when the *Maasdam* crossed the North Atlantic from North America towards England, British women were in desperate straits. They had endured nightly bombing, and thousands of seriously wounded civilians overcrowded hospitals. Many nurses, too, were no longer available: they were caring for wounded British soldiers from North Africa to Malaya. Seventeen courageous American women, determined to help their British sisters, sailed on the *Maasdam* as employees of the International Red Cross. The ship, however, carried other vital cargo and therefore was not entitled to Red Cross protection. Ironically, later in the war, women in the Navy Nurse Corps would be better protected than these civilian employees of the Red Cross were during American neutrality.

On a stormy summer night, the *Maasdam* was about three hundred miles south of Iceland when it was hit by a torpedo from a German submarine. "I felt rather than heard

the explosion," a Washington, D.C., woman told the *New York Times*. "I ran for my lifeboat. I knew what to do and did it instinctively." Two Massachusetts women had a harder time: their lifeboat collided with the ship and splintered, so that water immediately rushed in. "First it came up to our knees, then up to our waists," the *Times* reported. "Soon we were completely submerged." The inadequate boat capsized, and the choice was between clinging to it or swimming through the dark, cold ocean in the hope of finding safety. Lillian Evans of Arlington, Massachusetts, detailed her experience in a letter to her mother, Mrs. Herbert T. Evans. Written while Evans still was at sea, it was published several weeks later in the Boston-based *Christian Science Monitor*, on August 8, 1941:

Aboard a Norwegian tanker ... I am safe and well, but have only the clothes on my back ... We were on a Dutch ship to England. On June 27, at 1:15 in the morning, the ship was torpedoed ... Out of 17 nurses, 9 of us are aboard ... The Dutch are the nicest people imaginable and the Norwegians are perfect sailors. I never wept a tear or felt any regrets... All I could think of when I was in the lifeboat was you and in my mind was "Lead Kindly Light," which I say every night at blackout ... Our lifeboat capsized and I swam around for hours until the Norwegians came ... It's fortunate, isn't it, that we didn't buy expensive shoes and clothes? You can't believe how cold we have been.

A few days later, on July 5, 1941, the Germans torpedoed a second vessel with twenty-seven American Red Cross women aboard. Passengers had to scramble for lifeboats, as the ship sank within eight minutes. Initial reports censored its name, but later it was revealed to be a Norwegian freighter, *Vigrid*. Like Holland, Norway also had been overrun by Germany, and the *Vigrid*'s crew sailed for the Norwegian

government exiled in London. (American diplomat Daisy Harriman, in fact, had helped Norwegian leaders escape from the Nazis.) The *New York Times* reported that the German submarine that attacked the *Vigrid* came to the surface, and whether from chivalry or not, offered to take women aboard the submarine. The *Vigrid's* officers rejected the proposal, believing the perils of a lifeboat a better risk than becoming prisoners of war.

At first it seemed that optimism was justified, for on the very day of the sinking, survivors sighted a convoy of ships—but their distress rockets went unnoticed. Separated from each other by the North Atlantic's waves and winds, they feebly attempted to steer their frail craft towards Greenland. Soon they were starving. "We started ... with one hard tack [biscuit] each," a nurse told the *New York Times*. "Later this was cut to one-half. At noon each day, the captain opened a can of meatballs, divided equally among us. We were given about five ounces of water over a period of twenty-four hours."

After twelve days and eleven nights adrift, this group was rescued. Later they discovered that others of their shipmates had an even worse experience. Two young women from New Jersey and New York had shared a lifeboat with two British and five Norwegian sailors, and they only barely survived their nineteen days on the ocean. Helen Fornay Folks told their story for *Independent Woman*, the publication of Business & Professional Women. She recounted how that these nurses did their best to care for the injured men onboard, even giving up some of their own precious clothing to bandage the frostbitten feet of sailors. Their "few biscuits and little water were soon exhausted—and the rains did not come" to resupply their non-salt drinking water. Two Englishmen died, and the others were semiconscious when they finally were spotted on the vast ocean.

All of these women and more—including those such as Mary Lee Settle and Jacqueline Cochran, who joined the British military—worked in England for months prior to the bombing of Pearl Harbor that finally forced their own nation into the fight against fascism. No draft forced them to go: they voluntarily risked their lives and sometimes lost that risk. Because leaders of the American Nurse Association, the Army Nurse Corps, and even the Red Cross feared that revealing such truths would hamper recruitment of badly needed new nurses, very little was written at the time about their heroism.

According to the *Congressional Record*, on July 23, 1945, after the European war ended, a bill was introduced to "reimburse Marine Corps personnel for property lost in the disaster to the steam ship *Maasdam* on June 25, 1941," but nothing was said about the women aboard. The Red Cross remained busy with refugee work, and it neither gave medals nor wrote history. Because these women were civilians in a profession that is institutionally humble, most of the public never knew about their bravery. The postwar world was eager to forget, and almost nothing has been done to honor their conscience-driven courage.

*See also:* **American Nurse Association; British women; Army Nurse Corps; censorship; Cochran, Jacqueline; decorations; fatalities; Harriman, Daisy; Navy Nurse Corps; nurses/nursing; prisoners of war; postwar; recruitment; refugees; Red Cross**

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### MAGAZINES

In a time prior to television, magazines were extremely important to women. America's first magazines were published in the 1790s, but another half-century passed before national magazines aimed at women appeared. Although women were not admitted to institutions of higher education, publishers began realizing in the middle of the nineteenth century that women were at least as likely as men to be readers. *Ladies Home Journal*, for example, began in 1883 with Curtis Publication's recognition that the "women's supplement" of their farm magazine was more popular than the main portion.

Magazines aimed at women thus were only about a century old when World War II began, but they were firmly established: it was a very poor household that did not subscribe to any. Part of the reason for their popularity was that the era's magazines also carried a great deal of fiction. Publishers paid best-selling authors for short stories and serialized novels, and reading fiction substituted for today's television entertainment. Especially lonely wives of servicemen bought as many magazines as they could afford, hoping to fill their endless empty evenings.

Magazines offered information as well as entertainment, and the format combined the two better than other media. Radio had been available for most of two decades by World War II—but it could not provide pictures. Newspapers, of course, had existed for centuries, but they carried few photos in this era. Most of the nation's newspapers, in fact, were content to cover local news and did not attempt to report this worldwide war. Although women were credentialed war correspondents for major newspapers, as well as for radio networks and news syndicates, many female war correspondents were employed by magazines, including women's magazines. The other media option, movie theaters, provided visuals that newspapers and radio could not, but both the newsreels and entertainment



in movie theaters were in black-and-white, and, of course, the format was inherently ephemeral.

Only magazines featured colored illustrations: to be sure, they were drawings, not photographs, as color film had not yet appeared—but hand-colored illustrations added realism. More important, magazine articles on the war (or any subject) were more detailed than the quick flash of a radio broadcast or theater newsreel. Magazine reports were more likely to use maps when referring to geographically obscure but vital battle fronts, and they could be kept and re-read. Even advertising often was informative: many sellers ran magazine ads that usefully advised customers on how to deal with wartime shortages, especially the rationing of food and clothing.

Most Americans regularly read one of the era's two leading "mass" magazines—*Life* and *Saturday Evening Post*. *Life* was the acclaimed leader in black-and-white photographs, with some of its most famous work done by pioneer photojournalist Margaret Bourke-White. *Life*'s dominance of the field also may be partially attributable to Clare Boothe Luce, who was in the magazine business prior to marrying its owner, Henry B. Luce. *Saturday Evening Post*, which traced its history to Benjamin Franklin, also did a good job of covering women and the war. It was one of the first, for example, to feature a well-photographed story on the nurses who spent three years as prisoners of war after Bataan fell.

The era also had two major news magazines, *Time* and *Newsweek*, and they rivaled each other for stories about women and their changing roles. Both, however, frequently used a style that was more clever than wise, with endless puns and pertness. When, for example, Congress discussed formation of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) and the Navy's female corps, the WAVES, *Time* titled its story "She-Soldiers," while *Newsweek* used "Wacks and Warns in Prospect for Petticoat Army and Navy." The usage of "Warns" probably was wordplay related to the British WRENS, or Women's Royal Navy Service—but the headline served only to perplex readers and to diminish the importance of this tremendous historical change in the status of women.

Wartime women were, in fact, newsworthy, and other general magazines with wide audiences also ran many stories about the unconventional things women were doing. In the postwar world of the 1950s, when almost every household bought a television, many of these magazines withered and died—but during the war, millions of people also read *American Magazine*, *Collier's*, and especially the one that survives today, *Reader's Digest*—which was published by a husband/wife team, DeWitt and Lila Wallace. *Collier's* published one of the first stories on nurses who fled from Bataan, and *American Magazine* soon ran a follow-up, "I Was Married in Battle." *Reader's Digest* not only condensed stories about women from other sources, but also published original pieces by celebrities such as Eleanor Roosevelt.

The *New York Times Magazine*, issued with its Sunday newspaper, also survives, and doubtless increased its wartime readership by offering dozens of items that treated women's transformation with respect. The *NYTM* was likely to publish

signed articles of in-depth analysis on a single topic, with a very wide range of issues covered by a half-dozen female writers. Its only national competitor was the Boston-based *Christian Science Monitor*. Although the *Monitor* also had several women who wrote on the war, its coverage was not as complete as the *NYTM*, and the tone of articles often was less serious. Its best writers were Josephine Ripley and Alma Lutz.

All of these periodicals aimed at the broadest possible audience. In surprising contrast, their opposite, the smaller magazines aimed at better-educated readers, were much slower to grasp the importance of women's wartime roles. *Atlantic* and *Harper's* did publish a half-dozen articles each, but only A. G. Mezerik, "The Factory Manager Learns the Facts of Life," demonstrated much original thought. These magazines could have led the way to inspire thinking people to grapple with the complexities of feminism, but they largely failed to envision its importance. Even *Current History*, a somewhat more conservative magazine, did as much; its best writer was Gladys Palmer. *The Nation* and *New Republic*, both leftist magazines with thoughtful audiences, also were nearly silent on feminist change—something that is particularly disconcerting because *The Nation* was published by a woman, Freda Kirchwey.

If these "liberal" magazines did not see women's concerns as valid, it is hardly surprising that more conservative publications also would ignore the topic. Literary magazines such as *Saturday Review* and *American Mercury* apparently thought their readers were unconcerned with the war and women's rights, and what little they did publish on the subject generally was unsympathetic to change. *American Mercury*, for instance, featured an elitist view by Ruth Peters, "Why I Don't Join the WACS," as well as Samuel Tenenbaum's morose opinions on "The Fate of Wartime Marriages." Religious magazines, when they dealt with women's issues at all, echoed and expanded on the negative: *Commonweal*, *Christian Century*, and especially *Catholic World* could be depended upon for regressive views, even in articles written by women.

Although increased travel and global awareness was a significant wartime change, *Travel* published just one article on women's new activities and *National Geographic* just two (although both, by LaVerne Bradley, were extensive and excellent). Similar sophisticated magazines also failed to reflect change: other than some of Helen Hokinson's cartoons, the *New Yorker* published nothing of importance. The most egregious example of determined ignorance was *Gourmet*, which did not run a single story during the four years of the war acknowledging that its readers could not obtain the imported ingredients for many recipes. Its writers told of restaurants in Italy and China without mentioning that these places were inaccessible.

Thoughtful women who wanted to be challenged by new ideas, ironically, were far more likely to find them in publications aimed at the masses than in magazines with educated audiences. Although disdained by many feminists today,

the biggest leaders in feminist ideas then were *Ladies Home Journal* (LHJ) and *Woman's Home Companion* (WHC). Despite their Victorian-sounding names, they published the most valuable information on the wide range of women's wartime roles. WHC's best writers included Anne Maxwell, Patricia Lochridge, and especially Doris Fleeson. It also opened its pages to more political figures than most publications and endorsed feminist legislation editorially; in fact, WHC led the crusade for better utilization of female physicians.

*Ladies Home Journal* supported an even larger group of regular writers with definite (and sometimes differing) views. Although primarily a beauty editor, Louise Paine Benjamin managed to turn out some truly interesting articles. Nell Giles, young Elizabeth Janeway, and Joseph Chamberlain Furnas (who, in a reversal of the usual case, signed his name "J. C.") were especially thoughtful writers. Columnist Leslie B. Hohman, a physician, regularly offered his conservative views—and he more than met his monthly match in editorialist Dorothy Thompson, a brilliant woman who presaged much modern feminist ideology. LHJ had a tradition of husband/wife co-publishers; during World War II, Beatrice and Bruce Gould held that position.

The third popular women's magazine of the era was *McCall's*. Although scorned by the venerable *Readers Guide to Periodical Literature* used by libraries (and therefore somewhat inaccessible today), several *McCall's* articles explored sensitive areas untouched elsewhere. Betsey Barton's "Those Who Did Not Die," Zelda Popkin's "A Widow's Way," and Toni Taylor's "If Your Man is an NP" [neurotic/psychotic] were unparalleled in their analysis of difficult problems that more conventional magazines forced women to face alone. Far too often, major publishers responded to the military's "maintain morale" message and adopted a relentless perky tone that refused to heed real crises faced by real women. *McCall's* merits credit for ignoring this policy.

If women in general were slighted by the publishing world, black women were all but forgotten. There was no national magazine aimed at black women in this era, and those for African Americans in general reveal their tenuous financial circumstances with irregular publication dates. Within those magazines, however, black women's wartime roles received about as much coverage as white women did in mass magazines. The most thorough was *Opportunity: Journal of Negro Life*; its struggling, irregular competitors were *The African*, *Brown American*, *Pulse*, and *Service*. No national magazines yet existed for Hispanic women or other minorities.

Although they were unlikely to read them, African-American women—and women in general—could have found more information about themselves in scholarly journals. Sociologists and social workers did not wait until after the war was over to record its changes, as especially *Survey Graphic* and *Survey Midmonthly* reported on transformations in family life and other social institutions. *Hygeia*, the *American Journal of Public Health* and the *American Journal of Nursing* (ANJ) issued an impressive number of absorbing articles. They emphasized the nursing shortage, but also wrote on other

topics, and the *AJN* was especially good at running articles about women on remote battle fronts. The *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* devoted its entire 1943 edition to the war, and many of the volume's articles dealt with the changes women were making in the economy and in politics.

Beyond the social sciences, "hard" science publications also offered coverage. *Science News Letter*, *Popular Mechanics*, and *Radio News* were dependably positive about women, as were articles on female pilots and the new occupation of flight nursing in *Aviation* and *Flying*. Business magazines, too, were more likely to treat women with more respect than the major news magazines did. *Business Week* published dozens of pieces about women's crucial part in defense industries, as did the Labor Department's *Monthly Labor Review*. Although *Fortune* offered little during the war, in the immediate postwar period, it paid for and published two uncommonly thorough polls on relationships between men and women. Even more remarkable, *Fortune* featured an important work by stellar anthropologist Margaret Mead, "What Women Want." Of magazines with large male audiences, those aimed at scientists and mechanical innovators were the most open to women; businessmen were next most progressive; and clergymen usually were negative, often strongly so.

Home-related magazines probably ranked third of the above four categories: they did not do as much as they could have to promote new opportunities for women, but they did acknowledge the war with relevant articles. *American Home* probably made the most suggestions for dealing with wartime shortages, while *House Beautiful* offered realistic ideas for coping with overcrowded housing. *House and Garden* did much less; except for the occasional nod to Victory Gardens, its advertising often was more war-related than its content. *Good Housekeeping* was most likely to move from housework to other aspects of women's lives and published a number of positive pieces on employed women. According to historian Lisa Ossian, one of its editors, Emily Nervell Blair, was sufficiently feminist that she often found herself arguing with colleagues in the Women's Interest Division of the War Department. Blair said, "as she waved her hand towards officers at the Pentagon, 'you don't expect any of these men to go home and do their laundry, do you?'"

Laundry was indeed a wartime problem, as it was impossible to buy a new washing machine, much less build a laundry room. Although it was aimed at a narrower audience of professionals, *Architectural Record* wrote insightfully of the housing crisis, including the needs of young women who took jobs in defense plants and the "government girls" of Washington, D.C. The *Journal of Home Economics*, too, ran frequent war-related articles, especially on conservation of food and clothing. *Parents* regularly dealt with the effect of the war on children, while the federal government's *Education for Victory* was addressed to teachers and older teens.

Like *Gourmet*, the publications of the League of Women Voters, *Action* and *Trends in Government*, almost entirely

ignored the war's effect on their audience. Although it was the direct intellectual heir of the movement for the vote, the league of the 1940s did not begin to live up to its earlier feminism: instead, it filled its periodicals with governmental abstractions and organizational minutia, not calls to political action. In contrast, the monthly issued by Business and Professional Women (BPW), *Independent Woman*, was by far the era's most feminist magazine.

*Independent Woman* published many popular writers and political figures, as well as commentary on legislative issues by BPW presidents Margaret Hickey and Dr. Minnie Maffett. It supported women in the military, crusaded for equal pay, endlessly urged readers to take defense jobs and to join the crop-harvesting Women's Land Army. Although aimed at career women, the magazine did not neglect volunteering, especially in civil defense and as nurses' aides. It acknowledged the double lives of employed women by also focusing on the home, with articles on all manner of wartime adjustments. The magazine was unparalleled in the range of issues that it covered and in its realistic tone: it did not engage in faux morale-building or gloss over women's problems, including the routine discrimination against them. The only topic that it can be faulted for ignoring was that of war widows: not once in the war's four years did it publish an article on how these new, unwillingly independent women could adjust to that status. Finally, because it was an organizational publication, *Independent Woman* was not as widely read as it should have been. Others would have done well to have emulated it.

*See also:* **advertising; African-American women; Bataan; best sellers; Bourke-White, Margaret; children; civil defense; conservation; correspondents, war; defense industries; Fleeson, Doris; flight nursing; "government girls;" Hickey, Margaret; Hispanic women; Hokinson, Helen; home economics; housework; housing; Kirchwey, Frieda; League of Women Voters; Luce, Clare Boothe; Lutz, Alma; movies; nursing; Office of War Information; pay; physicians; prisoners of war; radio; rationing; Roosevelt, Eleanor; teachers; Thompson, Dorothy; Victory Gardens; volunteers; WAVES; widows; wives of servicemen; Women's Army Auxiliary Corps; Women's Land Army**

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## MALES, COMPARISONS WITH

From time immemorial, girls have been brought up to believe that they are inherently incapable, axiomatically inferior to boys. Both men and women accepted this belief in almost all cultures—even when women did most of the society's productive work, as well as bearing its next generation. Among the natives of America's Great Plains, for example, women were literal beasts of burden, walking and carrying the nomadic tribe's possessions and doing all of its laborious work, while men rode horses and did nothing other than hunting and war making. Obviously these women were not frail and contributed greatly to the society's economy, but they nonetheless accepted the male definition of their comparative weakness and therefore relative worthlessness.

Nor has women's reputation for inferiority been limited to the physical. When World War II began, in fact, only a few decades had passed since colleges banned female students, arguing that they were incapable of handling the mental strain of study. In the war era of the 1940s, there were doubtless physicians still alive who, in the 1880s, truly believed and frequently argued that sending a daughter to college would endanger her—and especially her child-bearing ability.

Thus, the public was sure that in any direct competition between men and women, women would be the losers. In both defense industries and in the military, the assumption was that women's work would prove inferior to that of men. Women's feeble attempts, however, had to be accepted in this national emergency, when so many millions of males had been drafted that females were the only source of labor to replace them. When the experiment showed that women did their jobs as well as men—or even better—everyone was surprised, including the women.

This was most striking in defense industries, especially airplane manufacturing. Vultee, a California producer of pursuit planes, set the first of many such milestones when it



hired twenty-five women early in 1941, almost a year prior to U.S. entrance into the war. "In three weeks," said aviation specialist Don Wharton, "the experiment proved a success: weekly production of some units had increased 25 percent, a few had zoomed 50 percent." *Newsweek* confirmed the phenomenon with a September article on the Vultee women.

After their initial shock at such objectively measured production statistics, many attributed female success as due to "natural" abilities, especially more nimble fingers. Rarely did they follow this "logic" to its natural conclusion and explain why these seemingly obvious natural abilities never before had been noticed. Some bosses, though, did find differing attitudes between men and women towards their work. A bomber plant foreman, for instance, explained to *Saturday Evening Post*:

Many young men came to work with notions about plane-building being a romantic business, but after working at a machine that trims tiny pieces of metal, half a mile from final assembly, they are disappointed and dissatisfied. Women are more realistic ... After men have mastered a single operation they usually want to move on to something new, but women are satisfied to stick to one job and learn how to do it better.

Although the culture would continue to see women, not men, as likely to be "romantic," it is true that practicality and persistence are logical outcomes of responsibility for housework and child care, and women inured to cleaning toilets and changing diapers were not nearly as romantic as men liked to believe. Other employers recognized the same traits of persistence and preciseness: "They're better than men," a Consolidated Aircraft plant manager told Wharton. "It's funny about women," he continued, "they are more conscientious than men on the testing machines ... Nothing gets by them unless it's right." The ultimate praise of another foreman, according to *Ladies Home Journal*, was that women "take orders easily, have the patience of Job and are more frank than men. When they make an error, they come tell me."

These subjective observations often came from men who initially opposed hiring women and were amplified by objective measurements. The early women hired at Vultee were not alone, as other women also set production records. At Lockheed, two African-American women with just one year of experience set an all-time record for riveting speed. The *New York Times Magazine* wrote of a woman in the electronics industry whose job required her to pull "a mass of wires through a long, tight tube—in 15 minutes against her male predecessor's half-hour." *Flying* magazine reported studies showing that women wasted less material and were more conscientious about salvaging metal and other recyclables.

Shipbuilding was a much more conservative industry than aircraft manufacture or electronics, but even some shipyard foremen were surprised to find they preferred female employees. Most had accepted women only because their federal contracts insisted that they do so, and few yards did anything to make life more comfortable—or more efficient—for their

new employees. Yet they, too, ended up praising women, especially for their willingness to continue to work in cold, icy weather, when men walked off the job. The Labor Department unfortunately titled its study "Employment of Girls on Government Contracts," but already by the end of 1942, the first full year of the war, it summarized:

The [ship]yards were practically unanimous in reporting that on the whole the work done by women was considered equal to that of men ... Foremen ... often found that women were quicker to learn ... Women exhibited a greater interest than did the men and were more anxious to know "why" and "how."

The munitions industry—a dangerous occupation that strongly discourages risk-taking—discovered in World War I that women were both more cautious and more productive, but had forgotten the point by the Great Depression, when the jobs went to men. In 1939, when the war began in Europe, said writer Frank Adams:

The Frankford arsenal in Philadelphia employed 200 skilled men to make time fuses ... they served long apprenticeships ... When the defense drive began, there were not nearly enough skilled men to meet the demand. Efforts to introduce hastily trained men from other fields brought a dismayingly large proportion of rejections of the completed fuses. Then someone had the bright idea of trying women who were expert embroiderers ... The Army found it could train these women to do the job satisfactorily in thirty days.

Many others made analogies between industrial and housework skills, but even in areas where women could least be expected to replace men, there were surprises. *Nation's Business* reported on warehouses, in which prewar male workers had used machines to stack goods for transport. With metal going to military needs, it was impossible to buy new machinery to handle the war's heavy loads of freight—and women did the job manually. "They form bucket brigades," the magazine said, "and toss the boxes from hand to hand up as high as ten feet. They've not only replaced the men, they're replaced the machines."

Although few managers were thoughtful enough to frame their perceptions into gender theory, several zeroed in on a fundamental difference between men and women on attitudes about time. Much more than men, women appeared to be motivated by the war: they wanted to make a quality product as quickly as possible; they wanted to bring their loved ones home and get on with their postwar lives. Despite the burdens of double lives at home and on the job, the predicted rates of higher female absenteeism did not occur. More than men, women seem to have pushed themselves to maintain schedules that often ran more than fifty hours per work week, with no vacations and few holidays. Men, in contrast, usually expected to do the same job until retirement—and they often adopted the attitude that there was no real emergency, that both they and the work would be there a decade later, and that there was no need to change routines for improved production.

In part, these differing attitudes were based in women's knowledge that—whether or not they liked it—their jobs would be temporary, and so they did not feel the need to pace themselves in the way that a man who expected to be in the factory for a lifetime wanted to pace himself. Beyond that, though, is the very real difference in the nature of the jobs that the two genders were expected to do. Women learned from household management the need to multi-task, to change routines when the situation required it, and to manage their own time without the discipline of an imposed schedule. A woman didn't have a foreman at home to supervise her, and she knew she could not fool anyone into thinking that her housework got done if she simply watched the clock until her "workday" ended. This usually unspoken but very real difference in attitudes towards time was at the heart of much conflict between men and women. A number of women who took industrial jobs because of the war, especially Josephine Von Miklos, complained that male co-workers forced them to waste production time with outdated methods and negative attitudes.

The same was true in the military, where most men were there because they had to be, while all women were there because they wanted to be. Although the women of both major allies, Britain and Russia, were drafted for jobs in industry, agriculture, and the military, proposals to do the same never materialized in America. To be sure, the Austin-Wadsworth Bill to draft women for industrial jobs made appreciable progress early in the war, and later, the Nurses Selective Service Act to draft nurses almost passed. Comparisons between men and women in the military therefore are more difficult because of the major factor of female freedom from the draft—but once enlisted, men and women were subject to similar conditions and some valid points can be made.

A second important variable that affects comparisons, however, is that standards for women in all services were consistently higher, beginning with age. Women had to be at least age twenty, while men were subject to the draft at eighteen and could join with parental consent at seventeen. Educational credentials also were higher; members of the Women's Army Corps (WAC), for instance, had to be high-school graduates, while men did not. The Navy's WAVES, the Coast Guard's SPARS and the Women Marines set even higher educational aspirations, while the historic all-female nursing corps of both the Army and the Navy required women to have their advanced degrees when they joined. In contrast, the Medical Corps assumed the costs of training male medics.

The same was true of the two aviation units for women: both the Women's Ferrying Squadron (WAFS) and the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) required women to be licensed pilots with appreciable flying experience prior to joining, while male cadets were trained free of charge—often by women who would have happily replaced them if that had been allowed.

Whatever the enlistment standards, most male military officers were skeptical about the admission of women to the

non-nursing service. Navy men were typical in "having their fingers crossed" when WAVES first took over air traffic control towers, said *Time* in "Rulers of the Air." Men "doubted if [women] could master ... the skills [and] were suspicious of how women would bear up under control-tower pressures. But now the Navy is sold ... [WAVES] will eventually replace 60% of the men."

Headquarters commanders were especially surprised to find that women's abilities could exceed those of men. On the third anniversary of the WAVES, Chief of Naval Operations Ernest King admitted to the *New York Times Magazine* that many naval men "bucked and roared at the idea" of women in their ranks, but the WAVES had "done so well that ... efficiency has increased in offices where they have replaced men." After the war's end, still another naval commander happily reminisced to writer Eleanor Lake, saying that WAVES "were the only employees I ever had that I didn't have to train on the job. They just reported one morning, sat down and went to work."

Colonel Don Faith, who commanded Fort Des Moines when it became the first post for army women, also held negative attitudes about women in the military and tried hard to get out of the assignment of training them. When the first class of WACs graduated, however, he told *Time* that he had "only one trouble ... they work too hard." Women were so eager to learn military science, he said, that they were "risking demerits for reading under the red EXIT lights in the barracks after taps." WACs also proved to be comparable to men in marching, inspections, and even in the mess hall, where the dainty diets arranged for them soon were discarded in favor of more substantial meals.

Comparisons on military clothing proved more difficult than food, and it took the army more than a year to stop providing women's uniforms and shoes in sizes made for men: apparently the assumption was that any women who would enlist was likely to be an amazon. Women nonetheless wore their uniforms with as much pride as men, and it was a rare case indeed when a military woman was disciplined for being out of uniform. Discipline, in fact, proved virtually unnecessary, and the military police units initially planned for servicewomen never were implemented because of a lack of need.

Women did not get drunk on weekends and go absent without leave on Monday morning; they did not visit prostitutes and bring back venereal diseases. They not only behaved far better than men, they also got sick less often and used military medical facilities less. According to the voluminous records amassed by Army historian Mattie Treadwell, the "non-effective rate" of women was better than that of comparable non-combat men. A Navy medical officer confirmed the pattern in a 1943 *Newsweek* article, saying that within the United States, sailors were four times as likely as WAVES to be sick.

Female pilots were the only women working with the military who lost their jobs before the war ended—but not because the WASP had failed. Aviation expert John Stuart

was one of many who attested to the ability of female pilots, saying that the WASP record was “more than five times safer than that of the home Air Force as a whole.” When Congress nonetheless forced the WASP to disband, *Flying* magazine opened its pages to WASP Barbara Poole, who wrote at bitter length of the contrast between the records of male and female pilots:

My flight had the same destination as 12 men flying the same type airplane. My flight delivered okay. The men delivered two! Ten little airplanes, in various stages of disintegration, lay along the way. Each little airplane cost ... \$3,000. And that wasn't an isolated instance ...

A single pursuit airplane costs about \$100,000. During the past 18 months ... the girls ferrying pursuit [planes] have had two fatal washouts ... During two-thirds of that time (one year), the male squadron ... had 62 fatal washouts—more than one a week. Even considering the larger number of men, computation ... gives the girls a lower percentage [of crashes]. One of the few statistics emanating directly from AAF [Army Air Force] headquarters enumerated pilot error percentages: .007 for male pilots, and .001 for the WASP.

Again, the measurable data demonstrated that women did a better job. Indeed, neither in the military nor in industry did a single case ever arise in which the experiment of substituting women for men was ended because it was deemed that women had failed. In both realms, over and over again the skeptics were forced to convert when confronted with the mathematical facts. Arguably, however, this historic change in the status of women made the least progress in the minds of those whose educational credentials should have made them the least biased. While many blue-collar and military-collar men changed their attitudes about women in their workplace, white-collar men often failed to think.

The result was a great deal of underutilization of the abilities of managerial and professional women. Thousands could have been successful managers in industry and in commerce, and thousands more were at least as well-credentialed as men in their professions. The skills and knowledge of female physicians, lawyers, journalists, governmental specialists, scientists, and more went unused or underused, despite national needs. This was particularly appalling in the case of female physicians, who could have alleviated over-stressed male doctors and female nurses—but those gender lines remained quite rigid.

Although female underutilization was an unconscionable waste of resources, the Allies nonetheless were much more progressive about inclusion of women than were the fascists of Germany or Japan, who thought that they could win the war with materiel produced by slave labor. Perhaps more than any other single factor, the key to democratic victory was democratization of the labor force to win the race for production—and the willingness of men to concede that women could fulfill any number of occupational requirements as well as men. Allowing women to do the jobs they wanted to do was an expansion of freedom that had major effect both during the war and after it. Never again would Americans so firmly believe that women's work was inherently inferior.

*See also:* **absenteeism; African-American women; aircraft workers; Air WACs; Army Nurse Corps; Austin-Wadsworth Bill; British women; colleges; defense industries; Des Moines, Fort; draft; electronics industry; housework; labor force; lawyers; Marines, Women; munitions industry; Navy Nurse Corps; Nurses Selective Service; pay; physicians, female; postwar; prostitutes; Russian women; scientific research and development; shipbuilding; SPARS; underutilization; venereal disease; veterans; WAVES; WAFS; WASP; Women's Army Corps**

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## MANHATTAN PROJECT

The super-secret program to build the world's first atomic bomb was called “the Manhattan Project” because of its origins at Columbia University on New York's Manhattan Island—and because the few military leaders who had any awareness of it did not want a name that reflected its purpose. Officially under the War Department's Office of Scientific Research and Development, at least eighty-five female scientists and mathematicians worked on it. As is often the case with military intelligence of great magnitude, the project was widely separated by geography, and women from Virginia to New Mexico worked on its many aspects. This not only helped cut down on the possibility of accidents and sabotage,



it also lowered the number of individuals who understood how the components would fit together to create the most horrific weapon ever used.

Mathematician Emmy Noether probably would have been a project pioneer, had she not died just two years after the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Scholars helped her escape from Germany in 1933. Genius Albert Einstein fled in the same year and soon settled in at Princeton University's Center for Advanced Studies, where the earliest theoretical physics that created the bomb was done; unfortunately, Noether died in 1935.

By the time that Einstein and Noether arrived, German-born Maria Goeppert Mayer had immigrated, along with her physicist husband, in 1930. He was rewarded with positions at prestigious universities, while she worked a series of largely unpaid jobs during the Great Depression, until finally joining the atomic-bomb project at the invitation of her friend, famed physicist Enrico Fermi. Although her skills were well utilized during the war, the postwar era brought the same anti-nepotism academic rules that had hurt her in the 1930s: it was not until she won the 1963 Nobel Prize for her research on nuclear structure that the University of California finally offered Dr. Mayer a tenured position.

Dr. Chien Shiung Wu never won Nobel recognition, but probably should have. Born in China in 1912, she earned her doctorate in physics at the University of California and worked on developing fissionable uranium for the bomb. In 1957, Columbia University would announce that Dr. Wu had disproved the law of parity, a governing principle of physics until that time.

Edith Quimby was studying physics when Wu was born: probably the oldest of the female physicists, she earned her degree in 1916 and spent her career at New York Memorial Hospital for Cancer, where she pioneered nuclear medicine. In 1940, Dr. Quimby was the first woman honored by the American Radium Society, and in 1941, the Radiological Society of North America granted her its Gold Medal; she was only the second female recipient, the first having been radium's discoverer, France's Marie Curie. A very busy woman, Quimby contributed to the Manhattan Project while also teaching physics at Cornell and Columbia.

Dr. Lise Meitner also merited the Nobel Prize for physics: she coined the phrase "nuclear fission" for experiments she conducted in Berlin in the 1930s. Enrico and Laura Fermi greeted Meitner when she arrived in New York in January 1939, and Laura Fermi wrote, "Although a Jew, she had been allowed to remain in Germany during the first years of the Nazi regime ... [Later], however, she had been compelled to interrupt her work and leave Germany. Enrico and I met her in Stockholm in December, 1938, a worried, tired woman with the tense expression that all refugees had in common." Meitner chose not to stay in the United States, however, and returned to neutral Sweden. Although she did not work directly on the bomb, her theoretical physics contributed greatly, as she had predicted atomic chain reaction at least a decade prior to its actual demonstration. After the war,

Meitner held academic positions in the United States; she died in Cambridge, England, in 1968 at age eighty.

Other women who worked on portions of the project include physicist Rita Mooney, chemist Lotti Grief, geochemist Margaret Foster, and Helen Blair Bartlett, a specialist in minerals. According to historian Kathleen Williams, Lilli Hornig helped develop "the high-explosive lenses used in the plutonium bomb, while "Elizabeth Riddle Graves helped monitor the Trinity test," the July 16, 1945, test that demonstrated the atomic bomb's effectiveness prior to its war-ending use against Japan the next month.

Some worked at the University of Chicago, where their laboratory was disguised as an abandoned building beneath the bleachers of an unused football field. Among those employed at this decrepit-looking laboratory was Leona Woods of the University of Chicago. According to authors Howe and Herzenberg, she "called out the neutron counts at the first self-sustaining nuclear chain reaction on December 2, 1942." Laura Fermi referred warmly to Leona Woods, saying that after this test of theory proved to be a fact, Woods "walked up to Enrico and in a voice in which there was no fear, she whispered, 'When do we become scared?'"

Isabella Karle was the youngest member of the team; she was so much a genius that had she graduated from the University of Michigan at age sixteen. Elda Anderson earned hers at Princeton in 1941, where she was part of Einstein's think tank, and then moved on to the new laboratory at Los Alamos, New Mexico, where she worked with key component uranium 235. The land on which the lab was built belonged to poet Peggy Pond Church, who later chronicled the story in *The House at Otowi Bridge* (1960). Others included Margaret Foster; in the words of science historian Margaret Rossiter, Foster "developed two new ways to separate thorium from uranium." Karla Dan von Neumann, who was married to great mathematician John von Neumann, lacked his educational credentials but apparently was enough of a personal genius that, according to Rossiter, she "was one of the first persons to tackle the programming of the project's first computer."

Selected members of both the Women's Army Corps (WAC) and the Navy's WAVES also worked on the project. Authority was granted for WAC participation in "the Manhattan District" on June 3, 1943, and the initial assignment of 75 women soon grew to 425. Those actually in New York City lived in hotel rooms contracted by the government, but as early as April 1943—before official authorization—some went on to Los Alamos. Others worked at Pasco, Washington, and Oak Ridge, Tennessee. Many had backgrounds in science that drew attention to them in basic training. A few weeks after the bomb was used, a WAC memo from September 6, 1945, said: "a number of enlisted women developed new skills in ... metallurgy, ... working with ceramics, plastics, and powdered metals; [they became] electronics ... and spectroscopist technicians."

Ohio's Bettie Gray was not officially assigned to the Manhattan District, but she had mechanical aptitude and therefore worked at the Naval Proving Ground in Dahlgren, Virginia,

about fifty miles south of Washington. She and other WAVES test-fired big guns there, and in documents at the University of Central Arkansas, she said:

In fact, the bombsight used for the first atomic bomb dropped on Japan was tested there. A big green tent was erected by one of the hangars, with Marine guards surrounding it, and everything was hush hush. We didn't find out until after the war was over what was going on in that tent.

Much "news," in fact, waited many years after the war was over, as the United States then was the sole possessor of nuclear applicability and did not want to share information with either former allies or enemies. The understandable result was that women's roles were reduced to footnotes, as even Laura Fermi's intimate recollection ignores most female scientists and emphasizes those she called "the wives." She was close enough to lead Los Alamos scientist Robert Oppenheimer that she wrote of him as "Oppie," but rarely mentioned his female assistants.

Many Manhattan Project scientists, including Dr. Elda Anderson, moved on to the federal government's new Oak Ridge National Laboratory in Tennessee. That, too, was secret, and therefore not available to help change public views on women and science. Among the news that was shared was that the plane that dropped the bomb was named *Enola Gay*. Pilot Paul Tibbets named it for his mother, a housewife in Glidden, Iowa.

*See also:* **Anderson, Elda; censorship; intelligence, military; scientific research and development; underutilization; WAVES; Women's Army Corps**

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## MARINE CORPS/WOMEN MARINES

In autumn of 1942, according to military historian Mary Stremlow, the historic Marine Corps had 143,388 members and "was tasked by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to add 164,273 within a year." Enlistment standards already had been lowered and the maximum age raised. To achieve this goal of more than doubling its size, the corps simply had to join the other military branches and reach out to willing women. The Marine Corps thus became the last branch of the military to be integrated by gender—but to their credit, when its old chiefs realized that their exclusivity would be shattered, they went about it more directly and more equitably than the earlier services had done.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed the bill creating the Women's Marines on November 7, 1942. Enough women joined that it reached its first recruitment target of five hundred officers and six thousand enlisted women within four months. By June of 1944, the Women Marines (sometimes called Women's Reserve, or WR) had risen to one thousand officers who commanded eighteen thousand women.

This was not the corps' first experience with enlisting women. Because of a shortage of competent typists and clerical workers during World War I, the Navy researched enlistment law and found there was no legal barrier to enlisting women. Approximately thirteen women dubbed "yeomen (F)" (with the "F" standing for "female") served in the Navy during 1918, the last year of that war. During the same time period, the Marine Corps—as might be expected from its determinedly masculine image—accepted just 305 of thousands of applicants, who were called "Marinettes."

During World War II, the corps' chief, Major General Commandant Thomas Holcomb, opposed female Marines until Congress insisted—but when faced with reality, it was he who decided that these women would not be dubbed with the cute names attached to the other naval branches, the WAVES and SPARS. The public had suggested such names as "Femarmies" and even "Sub-Marines," but a March 27, 1944, *Life* story quoted Holcomb: "They are Marines. They don't have a nickname and they don't need one. They get their basic training in a Marine atmosphere at a Marine post. They inherit the traditions of the Marines. They are Marines." Even *Newsweek*, the worst sexist pun offender, got the message and said that the new unit would be "not Wams, not Marinettes, but simply Marines."

Because of Holcomb's no-nonsense attitude, recruiting materials scrupulously avoided diminutive language usages. The most common poster showed a serious-looking uniformed woman holding a clipboard as she completed the flight check list on a plane. Lettering at the top and bottom said simply: "BE A MARINE" and "Free a Marine to Fight."

Ruth Cheney Streeter was the first commander, but she was not the first woman sworn in: "A few weeks earlier," said Stremlow, "Mrs. Anne A. Lentz, a civilian clothing expert who had helped design the uniforms for the embryonic MCWR [Marine Corps Women's Reserve], was quietly commissioned with the rank of captain." Those two, along

with six other well-qualified women, were appointed to top posts at the Washington, D.C., headquarters.

First Lieutenant E. Louise Stewart was in charge of public relations, while Captain Charlotte Gower planned the curriculum for training. Captain Cornelia D. T. Williams was in charge of “classification and detail,” which meant trying to assign the right woman to the right task. Captain Lillian O’Malley Daly, who had been a “Marinette” during World War I, headed the corps on the West Coast. Captain Katherine A. Towle, who had been a Berkeley dean, also worked on the West Coast and would rise to become the second commander, replacing Streeter when the war ended. Finally, Captain Helen O’Neill worked as the chief assistant to Major Streeter, who ended her career as a colonel. All, of course, were seriously under-ranked compared with their assignments.

The WAVES helped with initial recruitment for their new naval sister, and Women Marines wore WAVES uniforms until they got their own. Recruitment began on February 13, 1943, and as with the other female units, standards were higher for women than for men. Although male Marines could enlist at age eighteen (and at seventeen with parental permission), female recruits had to be twenty-one (twenty with permission). The higher age limitation was a mistake that earlier units made and one that the Marines, unfortunately, did not correct: by requiring that female enlisted personnel be a couple of years beyond the usual age at high-school graduation, an important recruitment opportunity was lost. While waiting three or four years for their birthday, many young women who might have enlisted straight from school instead got jobs or married or otherwise lost interest.

Enlisted women also had to have at least two years of high school and be under age thirty-five; officers had to be college graduates or have two years of college plus two years of work experience; officers could serve until age forty-nine. In all cases, women had to pass a physical exam and be at least five feet tall, weighing no less than ninety-five pounds. Enlisted women could be married to a Marine, but officers could not. Officers could be married to a non-Marine, but whether single or married, no one could have children under eighteen—except for commander Streeter, who, like Women’s Army Corps (WAC) commander Oveta Culp Hobby, left children at home to serve in Washington.

Unlike Hobby, a Texan who included African-American women in the first WAC class, Streeter of New Jersey adopted the Marine Corps’ tradition of reluctant racial integration. “Black women were not specifically barred from the segregated Marine Corps,” said Stremlow, “but on the other hand, they were not knowingly enlisted.” While it is rumored that several black women “passed” as white and served in the MCWR, none have been recorded. Officially, the first black women Marines, Annie E. Graham and Ann E. Lamb, arrived at Parris Island for boot training on September, 10, 1949—four years after the war was over. *Time* spoke the truth in a 1944 article on black women in the WAVES: “The Marine Corps,” *Time* said, “has all the women marines it needed.”

The Marine Corps demonstrated the same discouragement



Women Marines report for duty in Hawaii, 1945. Note their backpacks and the welcoming men. *Courtesy of the U.S. Marine Corps*

ment of talented women when the *New York Times* ran a story about the first female physician who joined—without spelling out that, as a sergeant, she held a rank far below what both male physicians and even nurses were granted in the other services. The hidden message seemed to be that her superiors wanted Streeter to limit her ranks as much as possible to the broad middle of white women who did not intend military careers. On the other hand, they did want those clerk/typists: according to Stremlow, “early recruiting was so hectic that in some instances, women were sworn in and put directly to work in the procurement offices, delaying military training until later.”

As in the other services, the women also had a long wait for uniforms, but when they finally came, they proved extremely popular. *Newsweek* was enthralled, using a half-dozen paragraphs to conclude that “the Marines gave war-minded women a chance to don the most colorful uniform so far.” Nona Johnson was one attracted by the uniform: she was an Omaha college student when, she said:

I observed a platoon of Women Marines marching across a street, resplendent in their forest green uniforms. I could not get the sight of them out of my mind. I went to the Marine Recruiting Office only to learn that I had to be 21 to join or 20 with parental consent.

Getting into the Marines wasn’t that easy. After getting my parents’ consent, I was sent home to wait. I passed the physical test and was sent home to wait. Finally, on 30 March



1944, along with ten other recruits, I was sworn in. Again I was sent home to wait. All of April passed. Then came the official brown envelope which contained my instructions to report to Boot Camp.

"Boot camp" in her case meant the Marine's historic locale at Camp LeJeune, North Carolina. Initially, however, female officers trained at Mount Holyoke College in Massachusetts, while enlisted women were sent to Hunter College in New York City—where many, according to Stremlow, were "billeted in nearby apartment houses." Within a month, male Marine officials realized this would not work and sent them to Camp Lejeune.

Brigadier General Waller recommended this and even expanded on the point of equitable training. "Mrs. Franklin Roosevelt," he said according to Stremlow, "asked me on her last visit how soon they [Women Marines] were going to learn to shoot. She expressed surprise at learning that the women of the U.S. were not learning as much about weapons as the women of other countries." As a direct result, Marine Corps women became "the only military women to receive combat training during boot camp." Some nineteen thousand women trained at Camp Lejeune. They arrived on troop trains, said Stremlow, "where they were met by shouting NCOs who herded them into crowded buses to be taken to austere, forbidding barracks with large, open squadbays, group shower rooms, toilet stalls without doors, and urinals."

Men called them BAMs for "Broad-Assed Marines," and one recruit said she thought that drill instructors resented their female cadets "more than a battalion of Japanese troops." Later, when popular band leader Fred Waring used "BAM" at a concert, women walked out. One woman, Marjorie Ann Curtner, also reported "a particularly mean-spirited stunt engineered by a group of Seabees who corralled every stray dog in the area, shaved them like poodles, pained BAM on their sides, and set them free to roam the ranks of a graduating WR platoon."

Not everyone behaved similarly, though, and twenty-two-year-old Marilyn Jeanne Jones provided positive news coverage in Portland, Oregon, at Christmas 1943. She was in the Marine Corps; her mother, Mary Jones, was in the WAC; and only her father, a civilian employee of the Army Corps of Engineers, was home in Portland. Marine Marilyn Jones soon would be headed to speciality school in Oklahoma: once past boot camp, all military women went on to schools for their MOS, or military occupational speciality.

Women Marines initially were limited to four general categories: cooks/bakers/butchers; motor pools (drivers and mechanics); quartermaster (supply); and NCO, or non-commissioned officer training, in which a woman learned to command new female recruits. By 1943, however, recruiting brochures promised women thirty-four MOS choices—and, with the benefit of hindsight Stremlow concluded, "the short-sightedness of the planners can be seen in the final statistics recording women in more than 200."

In fact, Women Marines filled 225 MOS slots, with occupations ranging alphabetically from aerographer to weather

forecaster. They included such non-traditional assignments as celestial navigation, parachute rigging, radio operation, air traffic control, and much more. As in the other military services, many Women Marines taught male Marines: indeed, by the summer of 1944, they taught all flight-simulation at Cherry Point, North Carolina, the corps' major air station. Again, however, this skill was diminished by the use of "Link Ladies," which denoted the type of simulator.

Many Women Marines, of course, found themselves in the traditional occupation of clerk/typist—so many in fact, that by the war's end, they held 85 percent of the jobs in the Marine Corps' Washington headquarters. Even there, though, the military had lessons to learn about women. According to Stremlow, officials "underestimated their skills and efficiency:"

The Marines requested far too many women, especially for office work at Headquarters, because they thought that half again as many women were needed to replace a given number of men. For clerical work, the reverse was generally true ... The exceptionally high caliber of the women resulted in too many underemployed WRs. Large numbers of women Marines felt let down and were bored by monotonous assignments that took only a fraction of their time and made scant demands on the skills.

Commander Streeter responded with endless pep talks on the importance of every job, but the abilities of many Women Marines clearly were underutilized. Another rule that Streeter found "galling but unchallenged ... was that women ... unlike men of equal rank, could not have an automobile." The natural result was that many women asked for reassignment to the Motor Pool, where they would have access to vehicles. Much more likely, however, was assignment to a Marine Corps office in Washington.

Nona Johnson was one of them. After Camp LeJeune, she went to paymaster school and then to Washington, where she would process pay allotments to Marine families. "The first WRs to arrive," she said, "made their home at the Cairo Hotel, dubbed 'Little Egypt.' There were phones in every room, room service, [and] ice water in summer." Such luxury would not last, of course, as they soon moved into Henderson Hall, a still-extant installation near the Pentagon. In older documents, its twenty-two acres are referred to as "Arlington Farms" because the Department of Agriculture ran experimental plant-growing projects there during the 1930s. The land, which is contiguous to Arlington National Cemetery, was transferred from Agriculture to the War Department as the military prepared for war in 1941.

Instead of hotels, some WRs were quartered with WACs in barracks at historic Fort Meyers, and "during their lunch-time, they all were anxious to visit the site for Henderson Hall," Johnson said. "As soon as the original buildings were completed in 1943, the WRs moved in." Evelyn Louise Robinson was one of the twenty-four thousand women who eventually lived there, or more than 10 percent of Women Marines. "It had the distinction," said Johnson, "of being the only Marine base composed entirely of women with a



Woman Marine spots aircraft with binoculars from the control tower, World War II. *U.S. Marine Corps Photo, Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

woman Commanding Officer, Major Martrese Ferguson.” Life there “was not all that different from Camp LeJeune,” Johnson continued:

We still heard that familiar, “Hit the deck” at 5:45 with all the lights being turned on. The mad dash for the head and the daily duty to prepare the squadrooms and ourselves for inspection. The squadroom had double decked, steel upper and lower bunks with a shelf and hangers for our clothes. Locker boxes were under the lower bunk with a four-drawer dresser at the end of the bunk. Everyone had a “Bunkie.”

She was shocked to discover that the laundry room had no washing machines: “we scrubbed our clothes on wash boards!” It did, however, have dryers—an invention not yet perfected. Those at Henderson Hall were gas fired, with “long metal vertical drawers upon which we hung our garments ... It was not uncommon to have a piece of clothing” burn so badly that “the garment was a loss.” Roaches were so common that she said the women “even named them, the one in my drawer [being] Elmer. We also couldn’t keep the mice out, as they learned about the ‘goodies’ most of us kept.” Nor were the new barracks completely insulated or even heated—and the winter of 1944/45 was exceptionally cold.

Yet, much like sorority sisters, the young Marines played practical jokes on each other and enjoyed their leisure time. Night guard duty rotated between them, which meant that whoever answered the communal telephone did her best to ensure a positive result: all “were very cooperative about trying to figure out what girl a guy might want to talk to when he couldn’t remember her name.” Volunteers published a newsletter, *The Word*, and volunteers also visited wounded soldiers at area hospitals. The only time that Johnson and her buddies were allowed to wear “dungarees” outside the compound was when they volunteered to be loaded into a truck

full of hay and taken out to a farm in Wheaton, Maryland, to help with spring planting, presumably as part of the civilian Women’s Land Army.

The entrance to their quarters was, Johnson said, “a large gate, which, at about a half hour before the expiration of liberty, was closed to ... allow only one person through at a time, and if they were a little unsteady on their feet after a night on the town, it could get them in trouble if they could not navigate through the small portal.” Yet all was not high jinks, as Johnson also concluded, “life in a barracks with 90 women in one squadroom, bunks no farther than 4 feet, can get very confining.” Much more sobering was the proximity to Arlington cemetery. It was so close that women were not allowed to sunbathe if a funeral was taking place. “Hardly a day passed,” she said, “without hearing the muffled drums of a funeral procession.”

As in other services, some WRs were assigned to the forty-three-member Marine Corps Women’s Reserve Band. Conducted by Technical Sergeant Charlotte L. Plummer, the band was based at Parris Island. They greeted new arrivals there and at Cherry Point; they played for ceremonies in the Washington area; they toured hospitals for wounded Marines, marched in recruitment parades, and performed on national radio. Although the work may appear glamorous, in fact, band members rehearsed in a room with neither heat nor air-conditioning and made long trips on uncomfortable buses. A male colleague, Louis Saverno, composed “March of the Women Marines.”

In addition to these historic East Coast sites, other women served on the other coast at San Diego and Camp Pendleton, California, as well as—late in the war—Pearl Harbor and Ewa, Hawaii. Smaller units on the West Coast were at Mare Island, San Francisco, and Santa Barbara, California. Some also served at inland locations such as Eagle Mountain Lake, Texas and Omaha, Nebraska. All learned important lessons in diversity and tolerance, as one told writer Eleanor Lake: “I can be tossed in with any group of women anywhere now—and live pleasantly with them.” The Marine Corps “taught me one big lesson—cooperation.”

Again like the other services, Women Marines proved far better behaved than their male counterparts. On their first anniversary, when thousands of women had graduated from basic training at Camp LeJeune, its commander told *Time* that among this large number, he “could recall only four serious cases of wrongdoing ... Two girls went AWOL [absent without leave]; one turned out to be a drunk; one was a thief.”

Yet despite women’s excellent record, male officials were eager to assume that Women Marines would disappear at the war’s end—and again, like men in other services, they wanted the institution dissolved while their preferred individual stayed. “In the midst of a determined drive to demobilize the Women’s Reserve,” said Stremlow, “300 women were asked to stay, and even as the last of the WR barracks was being closed, a new unit, Company E, 1st Headquarters Battalion ... was activated on 19 August 1946 with 12 officers and 286

enlisted women.” Less than two years after the war’s end, this proud corps acknowledged that it, too, needed women.

**See also:** advertising; African-American women; allotments; bands, military; demobilization; Hobby, Oveta Culp; Link Ladies; marriage; MOS; motor pools; physicians, female; rank; recreation; recruitment; Quartermaster Corps; sexual harassment; Streeter, Ruth Cheney; underutilization; uniforms; WAVES; Women’s Armed Service Integration Act; Women’s Army Corps; Women’s Land Army

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### MARRIAGE

No personal decision was so publicly and hotly debated during the war as whether or not people in love should be encouraged to marry. Everyone was an expert on this, and

especially young women received endless media advice on courtship and its consequences. Sex without marriage did not enter into public consciousness as a possibility, as it was assumed that no decent woman engaged in sex prior to her wedding.

The military was firmly on the negative side of the debate. Until this war, it never had to concern itself much with the issue: enlisted personnel who wanted to marry usually dropped out of the military, and a woman who married an officer in either the Army or Navy knew that she was, as the saying went, “married to the military.” The only women in the prewar military were in the all-female Army Nurse Corps (ANC) and the Navy Nurse Corps, (NNC) which began, respectively, in 1901 and 1908—and they were expected to remain unmarried or to resign if they chose to wed.

All that changed in 1940, when the first peacetime draft began bringing millions of men into the military; it changed still more in 1942, when the services developed corps for women who were not nurses. The Army realized it would have to accept married nurses late in 1942, but the Navy was more recalcitrant. Not until 1944—when 80 percent of all separations from the NNC were forced into resignation by the regulations on marriage—did the Navy finally permit its nurses to wed.

The new non-nursing corps were the Women’s Army Corps and three naval branches, the Navy’s WAVES, the Coast Guard’s SPARS, and the Women Marines. Their leaders learned from ANC and NNC experience that they would have to accept married women—and indeed, two of the four directors of the new corps were married women with children. Yet even though the new bodies accepted married women, there still were exclusionary rules that varied by branch and other factors, especially officer or non-officer status. The Navy, for example, initially tried to forbid WAVES from marrying a man in the Navy, although they were free to wed civilians or men in other services.

WACs who went overseas found different enforcement of marriage regulations in different locations, depending on the commander. Dwight D. Eisenhower, who headed the European Theater of Operations, consistently was most liberal, while “Vinegar” Joe Stilwell, the head of the China-Burma-India front, was nearly misogynistic. Congress showed the more human understanding than anyone in the military, and in 1944’s House Resolution 2277, it inserted a provision that married couples could not be arbitrarily separated in war zones, as was common practice in both the Army and Navy. Rules on who could date and marry whom not only proved ineffective, but also unimportant in daily life-or-death scenarios. Although enlisted men overseas continued to need permission to marry foreign women, as the war progressed, the military loosened its rules on marriage for nurses and other female personnel. It simply needed women’s skills too much to insist that they be wedded to the unwedded state.

Media discussion on marriage seldom focused on weddings within the presumably grown-up military, but some advice addressed to men strongly implied that marriage was



unpatriotic. Sociologist Henry Bowman, for example, said “these hasty marriages ... impair the efficiency of our fighting men—military authorities will tell you that a bachelor makes a more determined and fearless fighter than a married man.” That certainly was true—and some soldiers used the argument to avoid making marital promises to women with whom they nonetheless wanted to have an intimate relationship. Much too often, a man implied that a woman’s unwillingness to sexually please a soldier was unpatriotic, and “Victory Girl” became the term for young women who bought that argument.

The other chief anti-marriage argument made to young men was that it was unfair to leave behind a wife who might become a widow. Again, though, such advice often was more glib than truly caring, more abstract than personal—and marriage is personal. To his credit, author Lewis Browne acknowledged how unthoughtful his speeches to youthful audiences had been:

During a recent lecture tour I addressed a girls’ college in Texas. My subject was the war. When the discussion period ensued, the first question asked was whether I was in favor of war marriages, and almost without thinking, I answered, “No.”

After a moment of deafening silence, a young woman asked, “But didn’t you just say, Mr. Browne, that this war will probably last several years? What are we girls going to do? Many of us are already in our twenties, and if we wait several years, we may never get married.

For the life of me, I couldn’t think of an answer.

Like him, most men automatically took the “anti” side of the debate, while women were somewhat more likely to be “pro.” A few writers were so confused that they condemned marriage in the same sentence that explained its wartime justification: Jere Daniel, for example, called wartime weddings “utterly preposterous, contracted by young people because death was whispering in their ears.” Marriage counselor Gladys Gaylord, on the other hand, was convinced that the realistic threat of death was the best of reasons for reaffirming life with plans for the future. She questioned the middle-aged contrarians and suggested that they were not so much against marriage as unhappy with the era’s changed social life. Mothers in particular were disappointed to get the news of daughters’ weddings by telegram: they had missed what people in this era assumed was a once-in-a-lifetime event. Rushed brides wedded in an everyday dress, perhaps without even a photograph; even if everyone believed the marriage would be sound, sadness about the circumstances was inevitable.

And many people, perhaps most, did not believe that a hurried marriage could be a successful one. Some parents feared that their daughters might be exploited by a man who merely wanted to avoid the draft. It was true that the marriage rate rose dramatically after the draft was imposed in 1940 because, initially, married men were exempt. Several news sources quoted Selective Service officials who believed that until Pearl Harbor occurred late in 1941, “about half of



Army nurse First Lieutenant Stephanie Kordek, with fellow 48th Evacuation Hospital nurses as bridesmaids, married Army Captain Orry Potenbina in April 1945 in a teakwood forest, Myitkyna, Burma. *Courtesy of Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

the increase in marriages must be traced to barefaced draft evasion.” In the weeks after Pearl Harbor, not surprisingly, marriage rates soared again, but with its somber reality, few officials argued that these weddings were attempts at draft evasion.

Others nonetheless tried to slow would-be marriages. Clergymen routinely turned down weddings because they didn’t know the couple well enough or because they didn’t consider them sufficiently mature. Even the rector of New York’s “Little Church Around the Corner,” which was famous for wartime weddings, refused to perform the ceremony for upwards of five hundred couples he deemed unfit for his blessing. State authorities could be even more difficult, with the then forty-eight states each having its own laws on age, length of residence, and other requirements for a marriage license. Residency status probably was the worst of the legal obstacles, as many grooms were transferred between military assignments and might not meet a state’s requirement before being reassigned again.

And yet they married—in record numbers. Between the 1939 beginning of the war in Europe and the end of 1942, when the marriage rate peaked, it soared 25 percent. Some of this increase may have been only indirectly related to the war, as the improved economy that it created also meant that couples who had postponed weddings during the Great Depression now could wed. Most marriages, though, were because of current pressures: as a man faced the realistic possibility of death, he wanted to marry his sweetheart and have the opportunity for her to bear his child. That can be seen in the birth rate, which rose 20 percent between 1939 and 1943.

Some men, probably from small or dysfunctional families, showed a desperate desire to have a wife to ensure that

someone would remember him. Grace Miller Porter, like many WACs whose assignments meant that they were greatly outnumbered by men, received routine proposals of marriage. Some were half-jesting; some were serious. The one that affected her most was when she was stationed in San Diego, and it came from a man she had met only hours earlier. He, like legions of other young men, was due to be shipped out to horrific combat in the Pacific Theater of Operations: he told her that he didn't even expect sex, that he simply wanted "there to be a Mrs. Kent Davis so I'll leave someone of my own behind." When she said no, he "cried openly."

Another major marriage motivation for men, of course, was to prevent the possibility that his intended would love in fall with someone else while he was gone. That preyed on the mind of almost every man, whether betrothed or married, and enemy propaganda inflated it. Both Germany and Japan planted "information" among American troops—some of it very nearly pornographic—to encourage men to believe that their women were being unfaithful. Radio broadcasters such as Axis Sally and Tokyo Rose played to the same fear, and millions of men sent suspicious letters home based on nothing. A medical doctor writing on mental health, Erwin Krausz, said that fear of infidelity was greatest cause of psychological problems: "The absent husband or lover imagines that all men are after his girl, and she, in turn, imagines her mate surrounded by females."

The latter was highly improbable, especially after a man had gone overseas—when many went for months without seeing any woman, let alone one who desired him. The strain of separation, though, was such that even solid marriages suffered. Margaret Wilder, for example, had been married long enough to have teenage children, and yet—because she deliberately wrote positive letters to her husband—was accused of "having a gay time" in his absence. It was a fine line to walk, especially because the era did not allow frank discussion about sex. Sociologist Willard Waller noted that every war results "in the relaxation of morality, particularly in the field of sex"—but he was only half-right: studies showed that about three-quarters of men overseas had sex with a woman who was not his wife, but the reverse was not even vaguely true. There was no "relaxation of morality" for women, and Ethel Gorham was absolutely right when she wrote:

Rage against it if you will, but the double standard on sex still prevails. You'd be a foolish wife to ask your husband what he does on those leaves of his when he can't get home ... Don't imagine he remains pure as the driven snow to match your own temperature. Men aren't made that way, but they certainly expect women to be.

The military, too, accepted the reality that most men would not be chaste. It half-heartedly tried to limit prostitution—not so much for reasons of morality but to prevent epidemics of venereal disease. Few brides, however, thought of possible VD exposure when they wed, and although most probably were aware that marriage vows offered only a slim chance of male chastity, a groom's previous sexual experience rarely was a factor in the decision to wed.

Instead, the debate on wartime marriage broke down into about half-dozen arguments: those against it correctly said that war changes people and the partner might return a stranger; they worried about probable financial troubles and the possibility of widowhood or disability; they scorned many wartime romances as overly emotional and following a popular trend that would lead inevitably to divorce; they pointed out the military preference for single soldiers and the potential for infidelity; they thought that female fears of never marrying were silly.

Those on the "pro" side explained that war has a telescoping effect, maturing young people quickly with its reality of early death; they argued that lives should not be put on hold in the hope of unknown better times; they said that marriage was the proper preventative for illicit sex; they predicted that married couples would invest in mutual future goals instead of wasting their war-boom money; they believed that children, if they came, would only intensify future stability, and finally and most of all, that it was better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all. Even most of those who discovered that they had married a stranger believed that.

They became wives of servicemen, trying to live on a soldier's meager allotment and often forced to move back home with parents or to share scarce housing with other women in the same status. They worried and they wrote letters and they brought up their children. About fifty thousand became widows, some while pregnant. Painful through widowhood was, none said that she regretted her marriage. More than any generation before them, the young women of World War II made this life decision independently of their elders and with faith in the future.

*See also:* **allotments; Army Nurse Corps; Axis Sally; birth control/birth rate; children; colleges; courtship; divorce; draft; housing; letterwriting; "Little Church Around the Corner"; Marines, Women; Navy Nurse Corps; pregnancy; prostitution; SPARS; "Tokyo Rose"; venereal disease; war brides; WAVES; weddings; wives of servicemen; Women's Army Corps**

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### MCAFEE, MILDRED (1906–1994)

The head of the Navy's new unit for non-nursing women in World War II, Mildred McAfee commanded the WAVES from its inception through the end of the war.

Educated at New York's Vassar and Ohio's Oberlin (the world's first college to admit women), McAfee's academic career soared quickly, and she was president of Massachusetts' elite Wellesley College when the war began. She was recruited to head the WAVES largely through Virginia Gildersleeve, who was president of New York's Barnard College, a friend of Eleanor Roosevelt, and a founder of the United Nations. McAfee was similar to her Army equivalent, Oveta Culp Hobby, in that both were recognized as exceptionally capable when they were quite young. Just 36 when she was

sworn in, McAfee would build a large, unprecedented, and yet relatively problem-free organization within two years.

Her academic background showed in the somewhat cerebral image that the WAVES soon established. McAfee's familiarity with college systems was no doubt the reason that the WAVES first unit was located at Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts; eventually WAVES received their basic training at almost a dozen colleges. It was not a pattern emulated by any other military unit, but it typified McAfee's common sense approach: naval bases were tremendously short of space, while colleges were under-enrolled because of the war.

Her style differed from that of most other commanders, too, in that she sought relative comfort for her women. While others were eager to prove that women could take the ordeals of marching and other military maneuvers, McAfee preferred a low-key approach that simply got the job done without superfluous military tradition. She gave her WAVES a comparatively degree of personal freedom, saw that they were assigned to military occupational specialties that suited the individual, and treated them with respect and collegiality.

She also reinforced some feminine stereotypes. Resisting traditional military billets, she held out for at least compartmentalization of bunks and insisted that some privacy was essential to female mental health. "There are certain niceties it would be lovely for men to have, too," she told *Time*, "but if women don't have them their efficiency is jeopardized." At the Atlanta Naval Air Station, WAVES even had maid service: reporter Vera Clay said that "Negro cleaning women ... attend to the recreation rooms and for a small fee and provide 24-laundry service." Without the controversy that the WAC endured, WAVES also were allowed to entertain men in barracks recreation rooms, as McAfee summarized for *Time*: "it usually takes two to achieve recreation."

She also benefited greatly from Hobby's previous experience in setting up a female corps for the Army, of course, and later, Dorothy Stratton of the Coast Guard's SPARS and Ruth Cheney Streeter of the Women Marines in turn would benefit from McAfee's leadership with the Navy. Like Hobby, however, McAfee did not insist on the rank that she was due and thus continued the tradition of the Army's and the Navy's nursing corps, in which women long were under-ranked. Although McAfee commanded close to a hundred thousand women, she never rose above captain—a rank that sometimes went to men who led as few as five hundred sailors.

She also failed to push the Navy to record the wartime history of its women as thoroughly as WAC historian Mattie Treadwell did for the Army: when McAfee and other officers finally compiled their histories, so few copies were printed that the work quickly became almost inaccessible. Perhaps most seriously, when she retired and returned to academia, she did not use this opportunity to build bridges between women veterans and women's colleges. The middle-class women of the WAVES remained largely unwelcome at Wellesley and similar schools. In both this and her failure to



WAVES Director Captain Mildred H. McAfee stands with Captain Charles Slayton and Rear Admiral George S. Bryan; WAVE Seaman 2nd Class (SN2/c) Olive Pullen kneels as they watch Photographer's Mates Third Class (PH3) Frances Bochner and (PH3) Lillian Boscher construct a slotted template layout of aerial photographs used in the construction of charts, Hydrographic Office, Pensacola, Florida, January 1944. *U.S. Navy Photo, National Archives*



recruit African-American women to the WAVES, she showed more than a little class-based elitism.

Called “Miss Mac” for most of her military career, McAfee married late in the war and conventionally took her husband’s name. Douglas Horton was dean of the divinity school at Harvard, and her postwar lectures and writings reflected that interest. After his 1968 death, she participated in a few panel discussions and other attempts to preserve women’s wartime history, but she was not a leader in the revived feminist movement of the 1970s. Her name change may have been part of the reason that she lived on to 1994 and yet remained unknown to most of the era’s activists, even in Boston.

McAfee’s wartime wedding was similarly quiet; the marriage was not generally known to her WAVES or Washington’s media—which demonstrates her exceptional ability to manage the press. She clearly excelled Hobby in this area, something that is ironic in view of the fact that Hobby was a newspaper publisher. Rarely was a negative word said about Miss Mac or her WAVES, and she made the cover of *Time* on March 12, 1945. She possessed a clever sense of humor and strong pragmatism, both of which were key to her success.

*See also:* African-American women; colleges; Hobby, Oveta Culp; Gildersleeve, Virginia; Marines, Women; rank; recreation; recruitment; Roosevelt, Eleanor; Street-er, Ruth Cheney; Stratton, Dorothy; SPARS; WAVES; Women’s Army Corps; veterans

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### MILITARY OCCUPATIONAL SPECIALTY (MOS)

The military historically has operated with a highly stratified personnel system that defines everyone’s place with detailed job descriptions. Both in World War II and now, after initial basic training for everyone, an MOS (military occupational specialty) is assigned, and the new soldier or sailor goes on to a speciality school that teaches the skills for hundreds of categories. They vary somewhat by service, so that in World War II, for example, one might be a boatswain or gunner’s mate in the Navy, or perhaps a radioman or tank operator in the Army. An MOS does not correlate with rank: one could have an Army MOS in military intelligence, for example, and hold any rank from private to general. On the other hand, some MOS categories inherently limited a career, as a cook or baker would not become even a low-level officer.

When the first non-nursing women's corps began, some people in fact thought that women's MOSs should be limited to those of cook, baker, and other kitchen specialties—along with the obvious “women's work” of clerk and typist. Oveta Culp Hobby and other pioneers of the Women's Army Corps (WAC) did not allow this to happen, however, and by October 1943, when the corps was only a bit more than a year old, women already were serving in 401 of the Army's 625 MOS categories.

Alphabetically, they ranged from armament specialist to x-ray technician. An incomplete list of what fell between includes: air traffic tower operator; bacteriologist, bombsight specialist, Braille instructor, carpenter, cartographer, censor, chemist, code instructor, cryptologist, dental hygienist, dietitian, dog trainer, draftsman, editor, electrician, geodetic computer, hearing aid technician, interpreter, lawyer, librarian, Link trainer instructor, lip reading instructor, mathematician, motion picture projectionist, occupational therapist, optometrists, orthopedic mechanic, parachute rigger, pharmacist, physical training instructor, postal worker, plumber, proofreader, radar operator, sanitary inspector, sheet metal worker, supply expert, teletypist, topographer, toxicologist, translator, vocational adviser, and weather forecaster.

Within these long lists, there could be breakdowns such as radio operator and radio mechanic—meaning the WAC who used a two-way radio to communicate with men in the field, and the WAC who repaired those radios when they broke down. Within photography, there were three: the photographer who shot pictures, usually for public relations purposes and especially of ceremonies; the photographic technician who developed and printed the film; and the third MOS of photo interpreter meant studying photos, usually taken by a male photographer from a plane, to interpret whatever intelligence could be gleaned about effectiveness of battle techniques. An MOS as a motion picture operator could be assigned to the Army Special Services, for example, where she would spend her evenings showing movies as recreation—or she could be assigned to one of the military's countless training programs and work in the daytime, showing educational films.

More mundane kinds of work also broke down into types, as even “baker” had categories such as “pastry chef.” “Clerical worker” and “communications worker” covered huge office territory, as did “stenographer,” “typist,” and “telephone operator.” “Medical technician” broke down into appreciably more categories of surgical and laboratory work, as well as still more record-keeping. “Driver” and “motor transport worker” would be found in Motor Pools, where women might drive a jeep or repair a truck. Most of this nomenclature replicated that of the civilian world, but sometimes an MOS could be obscure. This was especially true in the naval branches, where nautical terms were used in every day life onshore. WAVES, for example, were taught to refer to stairs as “ladders” and walls as “bulkheads,” and such ancient language also could be applied to occupational categories that were no longer extant.

Further organizational systems took the MOS into the ap-

propriate corps—while still keeping her, because of gender, within the WAC or the Navy's three units for non-nursing women, the WAVES, SPARS, and Women Marines. Photographers and telephone operators, for example, would most likely (but not necessarily) be assigned to the Signal Corps, the Army's historic name for its communications arm. Still more breakdown could occur if she went overseas, where these corps had different commanders in the European Theater of Operations, Pacific Theater of Operations, and other fronts. An enlisted woman certainly never lacked for bosses, and all too frequently, multiple layers of bureaucracy resulted in conflict and/or underutilization of skills.

Recruiters promised that a woman's MOS choice would be strongly considered, and probably more than for men, the women's services tried to fulfill these promises. Without a draft, women's corps were dependent on recruiting and a positive image of keeping promises, so “classification specialist” was another MOS. These women kept records of a recruit's aptitude tests, her basic-training achievement, and the recommendations of her officers. They then tried to combine her desires with her record and, most of all, with the military's needs. Once assigned, and especially after speciality school, it was very hard to get an MOS changed. When that occasionally happened, it usually was because an officer discovered a skill that had been previously overlooked, perhaps an ability to speak a language or personal knowledge of an obscure but useful sort. Ruth Fenner Braddock was an unusual woman who insisted on the highly unusual MOS she had been promised:

The recruiting officer told me that I could be a chaplain's assistant, so I signed up with the WAC. But, when I got to Camp Kilmer [New Jersey], the interviewer said that he had never heard of a woman chaplain's assistant. With the strength of my Christian conviction, I really wanted that job, and I knew that I was highly qualified ... So, I told him I would leave the Army and go home if I was assigned elsewhere ... and I got the job. I scheduled church services and choir practices, wrote a weekly scriptural story for the newsletter, sang in the choir, played the organ and visited soldiers in the hospital wards.

Although a woman could not be a chaplain, chaplain's assistant was, in fact, on the MOS list for WACs—after initial controversy, according to WAC historian Mattie Treadwell, from some “who felt that it might prove compromising for a chaplain to be shut up alone in his office with a female assistant.” The matter was left to male chaplains when they requested assistants, and Treadwell reported that “a few hundred” women served in this capacity. Only the Air Corps sent these women to a speciality school, but Treadwell said that female chaplain's assistants “represented all of the three major religious groups in the United States and both the white and Negro races.”

African-American women, in fact, were the most likely to suffer from a mis-assigned MOS, and the NAACP kept a sharp eye on the WAC for such. In this era of school segregation, however, many African-American women had not

received the education they needed to do well on military tests, and WAC leadership was embarrassed to acknowledge that black women were over-represented in kitchens and laundries. While the naval branches barely even accepted them, the WAC pointed with pride to some outstanding units of African Americans, especially the 6888th postal workers in Europe. Treadwell also cited a dozen facilities within the United States where African-American Air WACs were performing well in a multitude of MOS categories.

Minority opportunities changed as time passed, of course, and the same was true of MOS charts themselves, as occupational slots were constantly updated when new technologies developed. The MOS of “geodetic computer” cited above, for example, referred to a woman, not a machine—the “computer” spent her days computing the most efficient routes for airplanes. “Link Ladies” trained male pilots on a sort of flight simulator that no longer is used. Although many wartime MOSs have disappeared, other straightforward jobs such as carpenter, plumber, and electrician remain options; but relatively few women, both then and now, request such non-traditional training. On the other hand, today’s military women finally are gaining access to the combat-related MOS categories from which they were long excluded—but which are essential to promotion and a full career.

*See also:* **African-American women; censorship; cryptography; dieticians; Dogs for Defense; Hobby, Oveta Culp; intelligence; military; lawyers; “Link Ladies”; males, comparisons with; Marines, Women; rank; recruitment; Signal Corps; SPARS; WAVES; Women’s Army Corps**

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### MOTOR POOLS

Because both vehicles and the gas and tires to run them were in short supply during World War II, the military and other agencies created motor pools to ensure that the precious resources were used most efficiently. Not even generals were entitled to their own car, but instead rode in whatever vehicle was available from the motor pool of the place where they

were working. Car rentals did not exist yet, and the multi-user policy of governmental motor pools helped ensure that wherever a publicly-owned vehicle went, it was being used for public business, not private entertainment.

Women of new non-nursing corps—the Women’s Army Corp (WAC), the Navy’s WAVES, the Coast Guard’s SPARS, and the Women Marines—often worked in the motor pools of their stations. This was something of a historic precedent: cars were not common in middle-class homes until the 1920s, just two decades prior to the war, and “jokes” about “women drivers” remained very common. Many of the mothers and most of the grandmothers of these women never had driven a car, and so being assigned to a motor pool often was viewed back home as something of an achievement.

These women sometimes acted as chauffeurs for top-ranking officers or for visitors without knowledge of the area, but lower-ranking local personnel checked out vehicles and drove themselves. Other women maintained the pool’s vehicles, including both mechanical work and keeping them clean. Some women drove convoys of new trucks, jeeps, and other materiel from where it was produced to where it was needed, while still others were messengers who used pool vehicles for deliveries. Private First Class Ione Dries of Wisconsin, for example, was working in the Ladd Field Motor Pool in northern Alaska, when the WAC barracks there caught on fire, and she died. Her job had been to do an hourly run between the airfield and Fairbanks, picking up and delivering anything needed on either end. This saved time, gas, and kept the vehicle under the control of a limited number of drivers.

Motor pool women also were among the first to make the military rethink its acceptance of the era’s standards on dress. Fairly soon after the WAC began, the Military District of Washington sent a memo requesting that drivers’ uniforms be modified to include culottes. According to WAC historian Mattie Treadwell, the uniform’s skirt had proven “slightly embarrassing to the wearer, particularly in climbing over tail-gates into trucks, or standing on a rack ...and leaning over [to] wash the tops of passenger cars.”

Public Law 441, adopted on September 27, 1944, finally authorized women in naval branches to go to U.S. territory outside of the continental United States, and some of the Women Marines stationed on Hawaii’s Oahu were assigned to motor pool work. Few roads there were paved, and male Marines clearly were impressed with the driving skills that women displayed as they jockeyed jeeps across its mountainous terrain. Fixing their own flat tires and innertubes, cooling the era’s easily overheated radiators, and making other repairs was part of the daily job, and male Marines saw a new kind of woman. The work called for flexibility and individual decision making, and Treadwell said that an initial plan to assign WACs with low grades in basic training to motor pools did not work out. Women with sub-normal intelligence could not meet job expectations.

At the same time, though, the Marine Corps and other services continued routine discrimination in terms of vehicle





Motor pool members of the Women Marines pause during a convoy from Marine Corps Air Station Cherry Point, North Carolina, to the giant port of Norfolk, Virginia. *Courtesy of Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

use, including the patriarchal view that a woman had no need for a car of her own. This attitude prevailed in the civilian world, too, but Mary StremLOW particularly resented it in terms of female Marines within the United States. “A galling but unchallenged rule,” she reported, “was that women onboard a base, unlike men of equal rank, could not have an automobile.” Simply being a woman meant that she could not keep her personal car parked in a Marine Corps parking lot for off-duty use. The result of being deprived of even joint-use of a car, StremLOW said, was that some women—who might have been more useful elsewhere—instead “sought assignment to the motor pool.”

Some who sought a military occupational speciality (MOS) that would put them in a motor pool doubtless hoped to sneak in a bit of personal driving, and even outside of the military, motor pool drivers often were accused of that. This was especially true of the motor pools operated by the American Women in Voluntary Service and the Red Cross Motor Pool. These existed in case of emergencies, when not only ambulances but also jeeps, trucks, and other vehicles might be needed—as well as people who knew how to drive them. More than one media source, however, speculated that many such drivers found it convenient to do their personnel errands while also running organizational errands. No one truly was hurt by this and it did save rationed gas and tires—but motor pool drivers, both in and out of the military, often drew such envious criticism.

It had to do with the freedom of a woman controlling a car, and that was not yet entirely acceptable, especially

with older men. Jane Pollock was a WAC Motor Pool driver in the United States, but her credentials meant nothing to an elderly gentleman who (with his wife) took WACs sight-seeing: without allowing any test of abilities, he was convinced that his skills in negotiating Tennessee’s Look-out Mountain were axiomatically superior to theirs. That attitude lingered after the war, too, but motor pool women did much to dispel it.

North Carolinian Ruth Coster was a perfect example of climbing the career ladder in motor pools. She joined the WAC explicitly because it would allow her to go overseas and achieved her goal with service in the Pacific Theater of Operations. In records at the University of Central Arkansas, she told of being promoted to a remote post in New Guinea, where her job was to find supplies to keep the motor pool running. By the war’s end, First Sergeant Coster supervised others in ordering and distributing replacement parts for trucks, jeeps, and other essentials. She and thousands of other motor pool workers not only helped bring victory, but also improved the status of women.

*See also:* **American Women in Voluntary Service; dress; males, comparisons with; MOS; Marines, Women; Pacific Theater of Operations; rationing; Red Cross; SPARS; volunteers; WAVES; Women’s Army Corp**

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## MOVIES

In a time before television, women went to the movies. Young wives of servicemen routinely went several times a week, partly as escapism to see animated cartoons and “short subjects,” as well as the feature film—but also and especially to see the black-and-white newsreels that were the only available moving visualization of the war. Those newsreels invariably were shot by men and used male voices, but on the entertainment side, the war’s increase in movie attendance brought fame and fortune to countless women.

The years just prior to U.S. entrance into World War II were golden for the movie business—and for long-term literary value. The year 1939, when the war began in Europe, brought all-time record setter *Gone With the Wind*, creating the iconic Scarlett O’Hara, and *The Wizard of Oz*, which

began a cult of Judy Garland fans. In 1940, Walt Disney released his imaginative *Fantasia*, and John Steinbeck's great novel *The Grapes of Wrath* came to the screen. Two important 1941 films, *Citizen Kane* and *How Green Was My Valley*, featured men.

Beginning in 1940, the Nazis barred American films in both Germany and its allied nations, including Italy. This censorship had the ironic effect of freeing Hollywood from concerns about overseas profit—and therefore opinion—and movies with international settings became much more candid about the true state of the world. The first acclaimed movie in which the war was central was *Casablanca* (1942), set in North Africa and starring Sweden's Ingrid Bergman. It became a classic, but Bergman's unconventional personal life drew at least as much attention at the time. Indeed, her lack of shame when she became illegitimately pregnant probably was the greatest single factor in setting off a postwar crusade for movie censorship, especially by the Catholic Legion of Decency.

Although most "war movies" featured nearly all-male casts, they nonetheless could be valuable to women. Famed director Frank Capra began his career by making several films intended to show the origins of the war and the reasons why it was worth fighting. They included *The Battle of Britain* (1943), *The Battle of China* (1944), and *The Battle of Russia* (1944). The military made a point of distributing these for soldiers and sailors, who watched them in recreation halls and aboard ships. Women at home also saw them, and these movies did a great deal to educate Americans about global issues and cultural variations.

The men who won Academy Awards for best actor in the first three years of the war earned them for movies with war/patriotic themes: *Sergeant York* (1941), *Yankee Doodle Dandy* (1942), and *Watch on the Rhine* (1943), written by the great Lillian Hellman. Best actress awards were less directly related to the war, with only the 1942 winner, Greer Garson, portraying a woman at war—and Garson's *Mrs. Miniver* was British. The other winners during the war years were Joan Fontaine in *Suspicion* (1941), a mystery; Fontaine was a Briton who became an American citizen in 1943. The next year's winner was Jennifer Jones; the movie, *Song of Bernadette* (1943), was about a French saint of the same name. Peers who ignored Ingrid Bergman in *Casablanca* (1942), rewarded her for *Gaslight* (1944), a mystery/thriller that was set in Italy and England, but ignored the ongoing war there. Joan Crawford won in the war's last year for *Mildred Pierce* (1945), a wealthy, but controversial war volunteer.

The Office of War Information worked closely with screen writers and studios to create movies that would deliver democracy's message, but, as with songwriters and the music business, the result often was an artistic failure. *Since You Went Away* (1944) is an example: it was based on a book by Margaret Buell Wilder that tellingly depicted the lives of mothers when fathers were gone to war, but Hollywood departed from Wilder's work to make a mediocre movie. It starred Claudette Colbert and co-starred young Shirley

Temple and Hattie McDaniel (the first African American to win for supporting actress, in *Gone With the Wind*), yet a screenplay of clichés made *Since You Went Away* unworthy of Wilder's work.

*Tender Comrades* (1943) similarly fell short of the mark. Four women who were true-to-life as aircraft workers, volunteers, and wives of servicemen shared an apartment during the war's housing crisis. In the words of critics Koppes and Black, "it featured women perhaps more prominently than any other war-related movie." Again, however, the script stereotyped the women into categories so that "its positive appeal [was] undermined with trite movie conventions about women."

It starred Ginger Rogers, as did another 1944 movie, *I'll Be Seeing You*. The title song became a longtime favorite, and in this case, Rogers played an unusual role as a paroled convict who befriended a mentally troubled soldier at Christmas. This serious topic, however, was largely ignored both then and later, and Ginger Rogers is best known as the somewhat frivolous dance partner of Fred Astaire. The movie did not become a Christmas classic as did *It's a Wonderful Life* (1946) and *Miracle on 34th Street* (1947), both released in the immediate postwar years. *The Best Years of Our Lives* (1946), however, won the Academy Award for the year's best picture, despite its depiction of the painful realities that three veterans experienced when they returned to the civilian world and the women in their lives. Its best known female star was Myrna Loy, who played the wealthiest and wisest of the women.

Most movies, of course, were less serious. Women often were portrayed as determinedly perky, even when they were in true peril—which they seldom overcame on their own. Army nurses who escaped from Bataan, for example, were profoundly disappointed with *So Proudly We Hail* (1943), which missed an excellent opportunity to show real women in their real roles. Hollywood producers instead ignored Eunice Hatchitt, who was assigned as an advisor by the Army Nurse Corps because of her genuine service on Bataan. The movie insulted these brave women by depicting them as dependent on men and trivialized their true suffering. Instead of the reality of bony bodies after years of starvation in a prisoner of war camp, it showed these women taking on the Japanese with perfectly coiffed hair and stylish make-up. Poor Hatchitt ended up being attacked by fellow nurses who assumed that she had approved the mistake-filled movie.

A Warner Brothers "short," *So Proudly We Serve* (1944) did a better job with a much less compelling story. It featured a member of the Women Marines as a gunnery instructor for men, and women did, in fact, teach many classes to male students. In this case, a chauvinistic student is bested in every challenge he presents to the woman, and every bias he holds against women in general proves wrong. It foreshadowed the later feminist contests between Katharine Hepburn and Spencer Tracy—and predictably ended in marriage.

As with the well-groomed nurses, *Rosie the Riveter* (1944) never got greasy or tired. It was advertised, accord-

ing to Thomas Doherty, as a movie that would allow audiences “to revel with Rosie as she welds her way to Victory in a melee of wrenches and wenches.” Doherty also cited *She’s in the Army* (1942), in which “a debutante songstress frivolously enlists in the Women’s Ambulance Corps to find husky romance.” That there was no such entity as the “Women’s Ambulance Corps” in “the Army” or anywhere else, of course, did not bother producers. *Ladies Courageous* (1944) at least used the correct name for the WAFS, but in Doherty’s words, these dedicated aviators were shown as “emotionally unstable” and “more interested in their personal career than in patriotism.”

*Four Jills in a Jeep* (1943) starred Carole Landis and Martha Raye in their genuine roles as USO entertainers aboard, but also gave the cheerful impression war could be lots of fun. It came out in book form, too, as did *All-Out Arlene* (1943), one of a dozen or more books that portrayed the new Women’s Army Corps (WAC) and other women’s services as something of an extended Girl Scout adventure. According to *Publisher’s Weekly*, Twentieth Century-Fox bought the film rights for *All-Out Arlene*, but if the movie ever was made, it quickly became obscure—doubtless a good thing from the viewpoint of WAC leadership.

It may have run into the same problems as Frank Capra’s *Women at War* (1944). WAC historian Mattie Treadwell said Capra shot film at Fort Des Moines, Iowa, where the first trainees were, and War Department officials unfamiliar with the new corps approved a script that was full of errors, including depicting women in combat. After long legal wrangling, *Women at War* was released with a disclaimer about the combat scenes. “Its value,” Treadwell summarized, “was dubious: at best it gave recruits an over-glamorous idea of WAC activities, and at worst, it perhaps alarmed timid prospects and parents,” thus damaging recruitment. The Red Cross reacted similarly to a 1944 proposal for a play about their female employees that was to be suggestively titled *They All Do It*.

Movies were strongly associated with “pin-up girls,” a term that apparently originated with a 1943 issue of *Stars and Stripes*, the daily newspaper for Americans overseas. Its quick entry into the language was primarily motivated by movie star Betty Grable. In her most famous photograph, she looked over her shoulder to the camera, which focused on her swim-suited hips and long legs in heels. This was about as much skin exposure as possible in an era when the post office still censored mail for morality, but millions of lonely men pinned that picture and others to the walls of their barracks or tents. Among other popular pin-up girls who also had Hollywood careers were Ava Gardner, Rita Hayworth, Jane Russell, and Lana Turner.

Some of the most compelling movie portrayals of women during World War II came long after it was over. *Julia* (1977) was based on a novel by Lillian Hellman; it starred Vanessa Redgrave and Jane Fonda as resisters in Nazi Germany and it won three Academy Awards. In *Sophie’s Choice* (1982), Meryl Streep won the Best Actress award for her portrayal

of a mother’s painful decision to save her son and allow her daughter to die in a Nazi concentration camp. *Tea with Mussolini* (1999) told the story of American and British women trapped in fascist Italy. Its virtually all-female cast included Cher, Judy Dench, Maggie Smith, and—in a departure from her career as a comedian—Lily Tomlin. Plenty of real-life material remains for good movies about women during World War II.

**See also:** aircraft workers; Army Nurse Corps; artists; Bataan; censorship; correspondents, drama; magazines; music; pregnancy; recreation; recruitment; Red Cross; refugees; teachers; USO; veterans; volunteers; WAFS; wives of servicemen

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## MUNITIONS

Munitions manufacturers had discovered in World War I that women generally handled explosives more carefully than men, and it was among the first industries to reach out for female labor. Millions of women worked in some aspect of munitions during World War II, with thousands or even tens of thousands at hundreds of sites. Some were in old industrial centers such as coastal Connecticut and the Delaware River Valley, where the DuPont family began the industry in the late eighteenth century. Most World War II munitions facilities, however, were in rural areas where an accidental explosion would do the least harm.

They were places such as Kentucky's Blue Grass Ordnance Depot and the Jacksonville Ordnance Plant in Arkansas, where women held about three-fourths of the jobs. Wisconsin alone had two large installations, the Badger Army Ammunition Plant at Baraboo and the Eau Claire Ordnance Plant. Eight miles of former cornfields were converted for just one plant near Clarksville, Indiana. Among Illinois' sites were a Rock Island arsenal, as well as manufacturing plants near Joliet and Carbondale. From Childersburg, Alabama and Aberdeen, Mississippi to Hanaford, Washington—where plutonium was secretly refined for use in the most powerful explosion of all, the atomic bomb—the munitions industry transformed women's lives throughout the nation.

*Newsweek* reported that already in 1941, prior to U.S. entrance in the war, "at least 30,000 women were employed in shell loading, small arms ammunition, and fuse plants." Reporter Frank Adams confirmed this, adding that the changeover from a male labor force had been quick:

Two years ago [1939] the Frankford arsenal at Philadelphia employed 200 skilled men to make time fuses ... They served long apprenticeships ... When the defense drive began, there were not nearly enough skilled men to meet the demand. Efforts to introduce hastily trained men from other fields brought a dismayingly large proportion of rejections of completed fuses. Then someone had the bright idea of trying women who were expert embroiderers ... The Army found it could train these women to do the job satisfactorily in thirty days.

The Army usually ran such facilities from afar, and with a very few exceptions, women in them were civilian employees, not military women. When the Denver Ordnance Plant opened in 1941, for example, the Army contracted with historic gun manufacturer Remington Arms, and within two years, 19,500 people worked there—just this one site employed more women than ever joined the Women Marines. Colorado's economy was akin to that of Iowa, with a focus on agriculture and a surplus of female labor, and munitions plants at Ankeny and Burlington also saw quick growth. Historian Lisa Ossian wrote of one worker, Lille Cordes Landolt. She had worked as a telephone operator prior to marriage, and even though she had five children, "decided to work at the new ordnance plant." The machines "seemed huge" and the work "dangerous," but "I really loved it,"

Landolt declared of this time in her life. She made fifty-five thousand bullets every day.

Connecticut, where gun manufacturing had centered since the American Revolution, was one of several states that quickly changed its "protective labor laws," which banned night work for women. These laws ostensibly had been adopted to assure women of a healthful workplace, but in fact they often acted as a barrier to block them from competing with men for jobs, especially during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Connecticut Governor Robert Hurley, said Adams, "lifted the ban against women working on night shifts of factories at the urgent request of the Winchester Repeating Arms Company." Executives had discovered that "cartridge inspection was a 'natural woman's job' that could not be done nearly so well by men."

Quality control was something that women imposed on themselves in daily housework, and more than men, women historically have shown themselves less given to bravado and more respectful of risk. These attributes were crucial in the armament business—not only for a woman's own safety, but also for the safety of the product when, probably months later, it finally was used. Josephine von Miklos, a mechanically talented woman who worked at several war jobs in Connecticut, described the precision required in grinding steel for time-fuse rings in grenades, so that they would explode exactly when a soldier wanted them to:

It is simply this: if your piece of steel is one-thousandth [of an inch] larger than it is designed to be, there will too much powder—by a minute fraction—in the ring, and the fuse will go off too late. If your piece of steel is a thousandth too small, there will be a minute fraction of powder missing, and the fuse may go off too early. The shell will either not hit the enemy, or will hit your own lines. This is how important a couple of thousandths are. There is no tolerance in tools like these. There is no tolerance in death.

Women also tested weapons and ammunition. All day, every day, they not only were surrounded by the cacophonous sound of battle, but also were at risk from malfunction and misfiring. Maryland's Aberdeen Proving Grounds, for example, began in 1918, but the first women were not hired until 1940, when "Amazons of Aberdeen" began working in the din of ground-shaking noise on its thousands of acres of firing ranges. *American Magazine* wrote dramatically of the first: "400 calm, grim women test Uncle Sam's weapons of war before they go to the boys at the front. They fire big Berthas, drive tanks over shell-torn terrain, toss 60-pound shells around as if they were biscuits." Women hadn't been expected to do well at this, the report continued: "The Army wasn't optimistic at first, feared that women would be rattled by the constant ear-splitting concessions ... The other fear was that being women, they couldn't keep secrets, and there are some big ones at Aberdeen." There as elsewhere, of course, women proved at least as trustworthy as men, and similar proving grounds hired women.

The chief thing that women in the munitions industry did, though, was to "pack" ammunition, carefully placing various

amounts and types of gunpowder into shells for everything from bullets for pistols to torpedoes for ships and big bombs to be dropped from planes. They did this work very carefully, or they didn't do it for long. From the time one arrived at work to departure, potential danger was present. At the most safety-conscious plants, women and men entered by different doors so that they could immediately take off most of their clothing. It was especially important to shed wool coats and sweaters, as the static electricity they generated could spark.

Wearing a dressing gown, workers submitted themselves to examinations for contraband that could ignite an explosion, including silk undergarments, most jewelry, and, of course, the era's ubiquitous cigarettes and matches. Once past the inspection area, a woman went to her locker, donned a flame-proof uniform and rubber-soled shoes, and pushed her hair under a fire-resistant cap. One told writer Dorothy Warner about a male colleague "who refused to wear a cap." He lit a cigarette soon after leaving work one night, and "his hair went up in flames."

Work was done in small group of other women, as employees were closed off from each other in rooms with yard-thick walls. Kept at an even temperature and humidity level to prevent static that might cause a spark, Warner added that each room was equipped with a shower, which could be "yanked on in a jiffy." Fire drills were weekly, and women mopped the floor twice a day to prevent gunpowder accumulation. Every night, the entire room was hosed with water from the ceiling down.

Across the nation, in Bellevue, Washington, LaVerne Bradley wrote of even greater isolation for safety's sake: "In small steel booths at the Bellevue Naval Magazine, women ... receive an element through a hole in the wall, put in the measured milligrams of powder, and pass it quietly through an opposite hole to the next booth for another cautious twist, tap, or turn." The tedium of this simple task day after day was mind-numbing—and yet it was far too important to allow negligence. Beyond the boredom that caused fatigue, some gunpowder contained ether, a natural sleep inducer. According to Warner, women fought sleepiness by singing—favorites being "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes," "Star Dust," and "Praise the Lord and Pass the Ammunition."

Not all sites were as meticulous as these, and arsenals at Elkton, Maryland, and Pine Bluff, Arkansas, each had two fatal explosions in just 1943; in Elkton's first one, fifteen were killed and fifty-four wounded. Anne Marie Young, a forty-year-old married woman, rescued co-workers from both Pine Bluff fires. She had been safe, but nonetheless risked her life to rescue others whose "clothes were enveloped in flames." Brigadier General A. M. Prentiss came to Arkansas, and according to reporter Kathryn Blood, praised Young's "calm judgment and presence of mind." He presented her with Distinguished Service Medal, the War Department's highest decoration for civilians. Some white women had received it for their civilian service in World War I, but Young probably was the first African-American woman thus honored.

She was not unusual in being an African-American muni-



African-American woman inspects a shell casing at Philadelphia's Frankfort Arsenal. *Courtesy of National Archives*

tions worker: perhaps because it was so dangerous, it was the defense industry most likely to hire racial minorities. Bradley told of black women who spent their days in "steel-barricaded rooms measuring and loading pom-pom mix, lead azide, TNT, tetryl, and fulminate of mercury," and *Pulse*, a magazine aimed at African Americans, wrote of others. One young black woman said in *Pulse* that the work discouraged conversation, "but you do a lot of thinking ... I keep thinking of some boy fighting on the beachheads. That's what I keep thinking. Black boy or white boy, it just doesn't make any difference in my own thoughts. I keep thinking of my own brothers and a lot of boys I know over there." For this, Bradley said, these women earned an "extra six cents an hour hazard pay," a rate that was in no way commensurate with the danger or isolation.

Nor were all African-American munitions workers in the South: Iowa historian Ossian said that they eventually held four percent of the positions at the Des Moines Ordnance Plant, an exact match for the town's population. After some initial discrimination, the plant advertised for workers in the local publication aimed at blacks—and the most revealing thing was discrimination based on gender. Men were paid 68 cents to \$1.03 an hour, while women's wages ranged from 54 cents to 78 cents an hour. That was higher, however, than the national average of 45 to 60 cents an hour. This amounted to about \$30 a week, significantly less than women in aircraft manufacture or other defense industries.

The low pay in munitions likely was a reflection of rural locations, as well as a correlated lack of unionization in this industry. Many of the young women who worked in eastern munitions plants were from the mining towns of West Virginia and western Pennsylvania, for example, and presumably were the pro-union daughters and sisters of United Mines Workers—but there is no evidence that UMW or any other union tried to organize them. Munitions remained the war industry most likely to have low and unequal wages.

The relative youthfulness of workers also was a factor in low wages. That was not necessarily a management choice: in fact, one plant supervisor told writer Mona Gardner that “if I would choose the age group, I would not employ any woman under 40 on the [ammunition] loading lines.” Insurance actuaries backed up his opinion with statistics, saying that “injury frequency for workers of 60 or more turns out to be less than half that for ages 20–29.” But both then and now, most managers are men who prefer young women. Another factor in this was the industry’s locations. After all the available local labor had been hired, many companies recruited young, unmarried women to work and live in the new boom towns that sprang up around munitions plants. The new workers were likely to be in their late teens or early twenties, too young to enlist in the military and uninterested in college; many had sweethearts or husbands overseas and wanted to take this opportunity to earn money before having children.

As they poured into the towns around the new plants, housing soon became scarce and rents soared. Although it was difficult to get building supplies during the war years, some companies built dormitories for their unmarried female employees. African-American women, however, never were welcome in such housing. Mary Vorse, writing of Elkton, said that its munitions industry “does not assume any responsibility for the Negro girls that come looking for work, nor for finding them places to live, as it does for the white girls.” They were entirely dependent on the local African-American network.

Vorse added that the biggest complaint was food, or the lack thereof. Few restaurants were open for swing-shift women when their work day ended at 11PM, and landlords refused to allow room-renters to cook at that hour. When women could find an open restaurant, meals were both expensive and low quality. Although some defense industries, especially aircraft manufacturers, built cafeterias for their workers, munitions manufacturers seldom did. Wartime boom towns never seriously tackled this problem, and young women told Vorse that it literally was too costly to eat. “Many girls,” she reported, “go through the day on a cup of coffee and a piece of toast.”

Rural locations also meant boredom during leisure time. Such towns had almost no recreational facilities, and local people often were hostile to newcomers. They were not welcome as shoppers, either; even if the young women had nice paychecks, stores had nothing to sell in this time of scarce, rationed goods—and what they did have, most storekeep-

ers set aside for their longtime customers. The USO and other groups organized recreation for soldiers, but rarely did any volunteers pay attention to these young “production soldiers.”

Susan B. Anthony, II railed against such neglect and especially against those who accused factory workers of excessive absenteeism. “Our production soldiers,” she said, “such girls as those at Elkton ..., have been unblushingly victimized by a steady campaign ... to keep them working while sick or injured. They have been told that, if they are absent for a day, they are slackers, deliberating helping Hitler.” In fact, absenteeism was not the problem that right-wingers claimed, and these young women made genuine sacrifices for their country with hardly any recognition. Much less than plane manufacturers, their executives and War Department contractors failed to commend them with productivity awards or other kinds of morale building. Although there was a group called the WOWs, or Women Ordnance Workers, it never systematized to the point of doing much to relieve the tedium and isolation.

Nor did the industry offer the least glimmer of a potential career path. The job was for the duration only, and there would be no promotions or pay raises or skills that promised postwar employment. In contrast, the new Women’s Army Corps (WAC) and the Navy’s WAVES administered aptitude tests and tried place recruits into the military occupational speciality best suited to the individual. As a result, some eight hundred WACs were assigned to the Army Ordnance Corps; they eventually served at ten ordnance installations along with civilian women, but they did specialized work.

At Maryland’s Aberdeen Proving Grounds, for instance, WACs were assigned to the new Ballistic Research Laboratory, where they used rudimentary computers for such tasks as measuring the trajectories of various guns fired under different conditions. Some WAVES similarly tested big guns for ships at the Naval Proving Center in Dahlgren, Virginia and other sites. WAVES were not allowed to go overseas, but WACs were, and according to WAC historian Mattie Treadwell, “reports from overseas theaters revealed that Ordnance Wacs were especially valuable in handling the complicated stock records of ordnance equipment, its procurement, storage, and shipment.” Highly select WACs and WAVES also worked on the biggest weapon of all, the top secret Manhattan Project that built atomic bomb.

Although military women often were under-ranked, they at least had a defined structure for promotion, as well as assured food, housing, and health care. Their usual life was not nearly as hard as that of most “production soldiers,” especially those in the unrewarding and dangerous munitions industry. Some of the civilian women in munitions also gave their lives. That we do not know how many were fatalities—let alone their names and anything more about them—is another indication of the under-appreciation of those who made the fire-power that won the war.

*See also:* **absenteeism; African-American women; boom**



**towns; censorship/secretcy; cigarettes; defense industries; decorations; employment; fatalities; food shortages; housing; labor force; landladies; males, comparisons with; Manhattan Project; Marines, Women; military occupational speciality; pay; rationing; recreation; recruitment; unions; USO; WAVES; Women's Army Corps; WOW**

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## MUSIC

Female military bands were new in World War II, and, of course, there were new patriotic songs. Although musicologists still bemoan the fact that no song reached the popularity of World War I's "Over There," the repertoire of military bands increased with new favorites, especially with "American Patrol" and "This Is My Country." Classical music reflects change more slowly, but composers expressed wartime feelings with increased dissonance, and women such as war refugee Nadia Boulanger had an impact. In classical dance, Agnes de Mille and Martha Graham were beginning their choreographic careers. Their themes were more hopeful and traditionally American, as de Mille created the ballet for Aaron Copeland's *Rodeo* (1942), while Graham did his *Appalachian Spring* (1944). Jazz, the nation's most important musical contribution to the world, continued its development with Ella Fitzgerald, Billie Holiday, and other

women, while country music—another distinctly American genre—also featured women who had historic influence, especially "Mother" Maybelle Carter.

There was much less equality in the era's "big bands," orchestras of a dozen or more members that almost invariably were all-male. They performed in the ballrooms of luxurious hotels and often were broadcast live on radio. Like everything else in the era, they were segregated by race, with Count Basie and Duke Ellington the most popular black men; among household-name big bands of white men were Benny Goodman, Glenn Miller, Guy Lombardo, and the Dorsey Brothers, Tommy and Jimmy. In all cases, though, it was the orchestra leader who was the star, not the singer. Especially white female singers, women such as Helen Forrest and Kitty Kallen, were completely eclipsed by the man with the baton. Most people, of course, could not hope to dance in great ballrooms, and "popular" music grew directly out of phonograph records played on the radio, as opposed to the live broadcasts of earlier days.

When they had a chance, almost every young person, both civilian and military, flocked to the local recreation center or USO during the war years, where they listened to music of their own choice on phonographs and danced the jitterbug and other new moves. Every café had at least one jukebox in which customers placed a nickel to hear their favorite songs. Sheet music also still sold well, as piano lessons were part of middle-class childhood, especially for girls. "Dayrooms," where military personnel spent their evenings, usually had pianos, and there was much appreciation for those who brought new sheet music and played new songs.

One of America's first war-related hits actually was by and about Britain, where German bombs blitzed: in 1941, Vera Lynn's "White Cliffs of Dover" promised there would be "bluebirds all over the white cliffs of Dover, tomorrow when the world is free." The next year brought a similar song, "When the Lights Go on Again All Over the World," an acknowledgment of the black-out curtains that, by 1942, covered windows in both American and British homes to prevent them from being targets for German planes. The major combat front of 1942 was North Africa, and it was the setting for acclaimed movie *Casablanca*, in which "As Time Goes By" was featured. That song, with its memorable line of "you must remember this," became strongly associated with the war. The same is true of "I'll Be Seeing You", a longtime favorite and the most popular song of 1944; unlike *Casablanca*, most people have forgotten that there was movie of the same title.

Grammy Awards did not begin until 1958, so there is no critical judgment of peers on the best songs of the war years. *Variety* and *Billboard*, the longtime bibles of the entertainment business, compiled "top ten" lists as measured by jukebox and sheet-music sales, and those statistics show the Andrews Sisters as the best-selling female vocal group—not only during the war, but for the entire twentieth century. The Minnesota-born sisters—LeVerne, Maxene, and Patty—had huge wartime hits with upbeat tunes such as

“Boogie-Woogie Bugle Boy from Company B” and “Don’t Sit Under the Apple Tree” (“with anyone else but me ...’til I come marching home.”)

Dinah Shore began her career with lesser-known big bands, but soon became the era’s first female solo hit, consistently ranking high in polls of both civilians and soldiers. She made her radio debut in 1939, and by 1943, had her own show, “Call to Music.” Sometimes called “the Shore,” she also acted and sang in war-related movies, *Thank Your Lucky Stars* (1943) and *Follow the Boys* (1944). Among her most popular songs was “You’d Be So Nice to Come Home To,” something that was particularly meaningful because she became a serviceman’s wife late in 1943, when she married a man she had met on a USO tour. They had a baby in 1948, solidifying her girl-next-door image.

Kate Smith probably is the female singer most identified with wartime patriotism. She began her radio show in 1938, just prior to the war’s outbreak in Europe, and sang Irving Berlin’s “God Bless America” at the end of the first show. When she failed to do so a few weeks later, fans objected—and the singer and song became inextricable. Its female pronouns for “America” made it similar to Katherine Lee Bates’ older “America the Beautiful,” and “God Bless America” became something of a mid-ground between Bates’ pastoral song and Francis Scott Key’s martial “Star Spangled Banner.”

A Kate Smith/Dinah Shore image was what military and political women wanted for the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC), the Navy’s WAVES, and other new female groups. The Office of War Information (OWI) tried to help, but the mostly-male songwriters it recruited never were able to come up with a tune that worked. Author Kathleen Smith has compiled long lists of forgettable attempts, including “Tillie the Toiler” for women in the Army and “The Girl of the Year is a SPAR” for the Coast Guard’s SPARS. Among others were “The WAAC Is in Back of You,” “I’ve Got a WAAC on My Hands and a WAVE in my Hair,” “I’m Wacky Over Something in Khaki,” and “As Mabel Goes—So Goes the Navy.” There even was a song about the Cadet Nurse Corps, but none of these became popular with either the public or military women. The intended subjects of the songs were more likely to sing ditties that they composed themselves, and many memoirs of military women include lyrics they thought up in their leisure time.

Except for “Rosie the Riveter,” which reached low-level popularity, the same was true for songs about the new women in defense industries. Even though the OWI reached out to eminent composers such as Irving Berlin, Rodgers and Hammerstein, and Johnny Mercer, songs such as “Belt Line Girl,” “Pluggin’ Jane,” and “The Woman Behind the Man Behind the Gun” were not hits. The last title was frequently used as a phrase on posters and recruiting materials issued by the OWI and other agencies, but the song did not become equally known.

As with sexism, these mostly white male composers also missed the mark in terms of racism. We can be grateful that

the public did not accept such songs as: “We’re Gonna Find a Fellow Who is Yellow and Beat Him Red, White, and Blue;” “Put the Heat on Hitler, Muss Up Mussolini, and Tie a Can to Japan;” “Slap the Jap Right Off the Map;” “Let’s Knock the Hit Out of Hitler;” “Let’s Put the Axe to the Axis;” and “When Those Yellow Bellies Meet the Cohens and Kellys”—which at least acknowledged American ethnicity diversity, as well as its biases.

The Andrews Sisters, Kate Smith, and Dinah Shore are the only women who rate substantial index entries in John Bush Jones’ 2006 book, *The Songs That Fought the War*. All were performers, but Jones says this about composers:

The total number of women—mostly amateurs—who wrote war songs will never be known, the circumstances of their songs’ publication and/or copyright registry making the numbers uncountable. But until ... the late decades of the twentieth century, women wrote more songs during World War II than in any other comparable period ... The vast majority of them [were] war-related. One or more women had a hand in writing 199, or roughly 12 percent, of the nearly 1,700 songs in my main collection of those by professional songwriters. In the amateur ranks, the number and percentage are even more dramatic. A woman composer, lyricist, or both wrote ... 33 percent... It would not be surprising if even *more* than one-third ... had one or more female collaborators.

A similar revisionist view is offered by historian Sherrie Tucker: she has spent decades researching “all-girl” bands and is convinced that there were “hundreds” during the war years. Among the black women’s groups she featured in her 2000 book are the Darlings of Rhythm, the Queens of Swing, the Sepia Tones, and the Prairie View Co-Eds—which despite their name, performed at Harlem’s famed Apollo Theater. White groups included the International Sweethearts of Rhythm; Joy Caylor, who billed herself as “Queen of the Trumpet,” and Her All-Girl Orchestra; as well Sharon Rogers and Her All-Girl Orchestra. More than two-dozen white women performed in lavish dress on a radio show, “Hour of Charm,” under the direction of a man, Phil Spitalny.

Most of these women’s groups were made up of a half-dozen or so musicians, with brass instruments as the most popular—although the five-member Darlings of Rhythm featured an all-saxophone performance. Women of both races played in military hospitals and in USO shows, and especially overseas, men stood in long lines to see them. Jane Sager, a white trumpeter, was confident of her musical ability, but also of the appeal that merely seeing a woman held for a soldier. “We could have spit on the floor,” she said, “and they would have applauded.”

*See also:* artists; bands, military; British women; Cadet Nurse Corps; defense industries; drama; movies; North Africa; Office of War Information; radio; “Rosie the Riveter”; SPARS; WAVES; wives of servicemen; Women’s Army Corps/Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps

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## **NATIONAL YOUTH ADMINISTRATION (NYA)**

The National Youth Administration (NYA) was a vestige of New Deal job creation during the 1930s, but it also played a significant role in training young people for war work in the 1940s. Although nothing about its name revealed its emphasis, it specialized in vocational education for racial minorities. Unlike the Civilian Conservation Corps that was created for young males in the Great Depression, the NYA was co-educational. In this, it followed an established educational pattern: in Florida, for example, the University of Florida was for white men; what has become Florida State University was for white women; and Florida A&M was for blacks of both genders. “A&M” stood for “Agricultural and Mechanical,” a clear indication of the limited vocational curriculum offered to minorities.

The National Youth Administration was created in 1935, and women had a great deal to do with that. Eleanor Roosevelt urged such an agency, as did Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins and Grace Abbott, who headed the federal Children’s Bureau until 1934; even aviator Amelia Earhart joined the advisory committee for the NYA. Feminist Thelma McKelvey was its secretary, but its public face was Mary McLeod Bethune, who pioneered African-American education with what became the private Bethune-Cookman College of Daytona Beach, Florida. Her official title was head of the NYA’s Division of Negro Affairs, which was the highest federal appointment for an African American of either gender.

The NYA not only reached out to African Americans, but also to American Indians and Mexican Americans. As rising fascism in Europe brought refugees to the United States in the late 1930s, it proved the only federal agency that reached

out to these troubled teenagers. In 1939, when the European began, Bethune traveled some thirty-five thousand miles recruiting students for training in war jobs. The nation’s first peacetime draft was imposed the next year, and, by the time that the United States entered the war late in 1941, NYA classes in traditionally male blue-collar skills increasingly were composed of young women. One class in metalwork, for example, had twenty-seven female students and just three male ones. Having passed such a course made it easier for a minority woman to prove to a potential boss that she was capable of doing the work.

Shipbuilding was the defense industry most reluctant to hire women, and black women saw NYA’s credentials as their way into the labor force. Mary Anderson, head of the Women’s Bureau of the Labor Department, confirmed this—and pointed out that a black woman made the highest grade among six thousand people who took the examination for jobs in the nationwide shipyards operated by the U.S. Navy. Even with NYA credentials, though, minority women often had a hard time getting the jobs for which they were qualified—even in Iowa, a state that many might assume had little bias.

Eighteen-year-old Elizabeth Shackelford not only had graduated from an NYA program for munitions workers, she also was named the “youth worker most valuable for war production.” The Des Moines Ordnance Plant, however, refused to hire her until she filed suit in federal court, charging that the failure to hire her was a violation of Executive Order 8802. The Congress of that era would not consider legislation to ban racial discrimination in hiring, and the order was President Franklin Roosevelt’s executive branch attempt to create a full and fair labor force. U.S. Rubber had contracted with the federal government to run the ordnance



The 1940s caption on this NYA photo read, “girl student, milling teeth.” *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

plant, and the company soon gave in to the strength of the young woman’s arguments. Filed in April 1942, it was the first such case in the nation.

That sort of activism was exactly what conservatives feared when the NYA began. Although it still had some four hundred thousand enrollees in 1942, as the economy boomed with the war, it was possible for minority youth to get defense industry jobs without training; equally important, young men dropped out of the NYA as they were drafted or voluntarily enlisted in the military. Convinced that the agency no longer was needed, congressional appropriations plummeted from a high of \$119 million in 1941 to \$43 million in 1942.

Having built her college literally with pennies, Bethune was not the sort of administrator to keep a program operating when the need for it had passed, and she made no strong fight against the NYA’s 1943 disbandment. By then, she had already served two years on the advisory board for the new Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) and moved on to other things. Thelma McKelvey went on to the War Manpower Commission, and the agency spent its \$3.7 million appropriation in 1943 to pay its bills and close its doors.

Like most federal funding, the NYA spent more on young men than on young women, but it nonetheless made a vital difference in the lives of countless women. Conservatives, of course, always had charged that it was “wasteful government spending,” and young Roberta Gaulden refuted such a

claim by the governor of Oklahoma. According to historian Richard Reiman, Gaulden angrily wrote to Congress “to correct the Governor’s mistaken opinion” of the NYA. Trained as a stenographer, she said:

I worked so hard in that first job that I was too exhausted each night to do anything but go to bed ... [Without the NYA], I became so despondent ... that at times I could easily have persuaded myself to jump off a bridge ... The National Youth Administration has made everything possible for me; the National Youth Administration is the best friend I have.

**See also:** adolescence; African-American women; Anderson, Mary; Bethune, Mary McLeod; colleges; defense industries; draft; labor force; males, comparisons with; munitions; Native-American women; Perkins, Frances; Roosevelt, Eleanor; shipbuilding

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## NATIVE-AMERICAN WOMEN

African Americans lived with racial segregation in most of the United States of World War II, and that was even more true of Native Americans. To fully comprehend their status in the 1940s, it is worth remembering that the U.S. Army’s massacre of women and children at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, was in 1892—less than a half-century earlier.

Pushed into reservations that were primarily in arid portions of the West and in the bitter cold of the Upper Midwest, they were largely isolated from white society. In the impoverished Great Depression of the 1930s, they were among the poorest of the poor: many lacked electricity and its resultant radio communication. Relatively few owned cars; passenger trains ran far from reservations; and very few women had any travel experience. It was a complete and negative change from their grandmothers’ lives, when women of most tribes traveled hundreds of miles annually.

Their children attended boarding schools run by the federal government, often far from home and yet still segregated from whites. The curriculum was designed to separate them from tribal beliefs, but there was little expectation that students would do anything after graduation other than return

to reservation life. They were taught vocational skills, but especially in the case of girls, this was largely irrelevant: domesticity in reservation homes bore little similarity to the era's home economics.

As World War II began, says historian Mary Ann Weston, "Native Americans, most of whom lived on isolated, rural reservations, numbered fewer than 400,000 in a national population of 132 million." Descendants of the nation's original inhabitants had become official U.S. citizens in 1924, less than two decades earlier, but when news came of Pearl Harbor, most responded patriotically. *American Mercury* reported that fascists' covert attempts to convince Indians to rebel against the federal government meet with ridicule—and indeed, any minority with the least knowledge of fascist views on race understood the importance of joining the opposite side. From the North Carolina Cherokee to the Arizona Apache, American tribes supported the war. Just weeks after it began, for example, the *New York Times* of December 18, 1941, wrote about Chippewa women: well experienced with guns, they formed a rifle platoon to resist any enemy who made it to Minnesota.

Students at the U.S. Indian School in Santa Fe, New Mexico, for another example, enthusiastically participated in a 1942 poster contest sponsored by the Treasury Department to help sell war bonds. Three winning posters, now preserved at the Library of Congress, all featured Native-American artistic themes; one was drawn by Eva Mirabel, who signed herself Eah-Ha-Wa. The introduction to their artwork read:

All over the country American Indians still in school are making posters that tell how they feel about the war ... Some of the student poster-makers say these things differently because they see America and the war with a special vision.... They see the war as their fight—to be fought with their ancient courage and cunning.

That image of brave warriors repeatedly appeared in the media after Pearl Harbor—although, as with women, the media's language usage often diminished the very attributes that ostensibly were praised. Just like the new women in the military or in defense industries, Native-American soldiers were greeted with headlines that emphasized their exoticness; among them were "Indians on the Warpath Again" and "Braves on the Warpath." The reality was that new citizenship meant that these men now were subject to the draft. Many volunteered prior to being drafted, reasonably believing that they would find more opportunity in the military than at home. Some indeed did: postwar celebrities included the "Navajo code talkers," whose cryptology never was cracked by the enemy, as well as individuals such as Ira Hayes, one of the Marines to raise the flag at Iwo Jima.

No woman, however, received the accolades bestowed on such men—nor did any compare with women of other minorities such as African-American Charity Adams or Chinese-American Hazel Ying Lee. A few Indian women had the credentials to make it into the Army Nurse Corps, in which all members were officers, but as far as is known,

none became an officer in any of the four non-nursing military corps open to women.

Native-American women are known to have joined the enlisted ranks of the Women Marines and the Navy's WAVES, but the majority entered the most racially integrated service, the Women's Army Corps (WAC). Official WAC historian Mattie Treadwell reported that "a few women ... of American Indian descent" enlisted, and went on to say that unlike African Americans, they (and Asian Americans) "were not segregated, but scattered through ordinary WAC units according to skills." Treadwell acknowledged that they "were very rarely recruited," but at least one WAC publicity photo featured an example: a young woman identified as a "Sioux from Pipestone, Minnesota" sat smiling in the driver's seat of a motor pool jeep.

Estimates by modern scholars place the number of Native-American women in the World War II military as somewhat fewer than eight hundred—but as a percentage of their population, that is only slightly lower than the enlistment rate of all women. About twenty-five thousand Native-American men served in the military, a somewhat higher percentage than that of all men. Although the military did not attract many Native-American women, they entered defense industries in an even greater percentage than white women. Historian Kenneth William Townsend concluded:

Of the forty thousand Indians who gained employment in urban areas during the war, approximately twelve thousand were women. That figure represented one-fifth of all able-bodied Indian women. They gained positions as chemists, truck drivers, inspectors, and press operators at ordnance plants in Des Moines, Iowa; Fort Wingate, Arizona; and DeSoto, Kansas. Many worked for Douglas Aircraft Corporation and Martin Aircraft as riveters and sheet-metal cutters. One woman riveter of B-26 parts, whose brother was in the Army Air Corps, kept as her motto: 'You keep 'em flying, and I'll keep 'em up.'

Like most women in defense industries, they probably trained on the job, but the National Youth Administration also reached out to young Indians with vocational training. Townsend told of Oklahoma's Chillicothe Indian School, where a 1942 class in cutting metal for aircraft was composed of twenty-one women and just three men. Female graduates reportedly earned an average \$40 a week, lower than the general average for women in this industry, but higher than most women's income—and far better than a young woman could expect on a reservation. Alison Bernstein wrote that teachers at Indian schools "openly recruited women students for sheet metal and welding classes":

Because of the males' uncertain draft status, program directors preferred to admit women students who would, in all probability, complete the course. Indian women ... were welcomed into defense plants as riveters, inspectors, and machinists. Pueblo Indian women took auto mechanic training courses at the agency headquarters, and learned to haul freight across vast stretches of desert in the Southwest.

Lily and Lorraine Leveau felt welcome when they traveled



all the way from their northern Minnesota home to Seattle and its huge Boeing plants. Lured by the high pay, they also were pleased to realize that there was no discrimination; no one seemed to care that they were Ojibwa. Urban life frightened them, however, as Townsend quoted: "All we did was sleep and work. We had no entertainment because we were too afraid to go anywhere." According to historian Jere Bishop Franco, another such woman earned an "E" award for her skills as a riveter; this was one of the highest decorations that the War Department gave to civilians.

With approximately twenty-five thousand men in the military, another twenty-eight thousand working in defense industries far from reservations, and still more uncounted thousands of men who found good pay with construction, railroads, and other industries, reservations lost most of the working-age male population during the war. With so many men gone, women, of course, replaced them in tribal jobs. Women long had participated in tribal councils, and that role naturally increased as men were absent.

Women also historically were the primary farmers in those tribes that grew crops, and they dramatically increased their harvests to meet wartime food needs. Sociologist John Collier reported a 35 percent rise in the amount of acreage under cultivation in 1942, as women drove tractors and other farm machinery. Taking the long ecological view, Ojibwa women planted more than ninety thousand trees in 1943–1944, while other women left the reservation to work for white farmers at crucial planting and harvest times. Franco said that in 1943, half of Navajo off-reservation workers were women, many hired by fresh-produce farmers who "preferred Navajo women because they were hardworking." Bernstein reported that "Indian women worked the second shift in the lumber mills on the Menominee reservation in Wisconsin."

More than any other ethnicity, American Indians invested in war saving bonds. Tribes from Alaska south held fundraisers, and tribes as small as the Klamath, Quapaw, Kiowa, and Oklahoma Seminole were among those who loaned the government an eventual total of \$12.5 million—a huge amount of money from 400,000 traditionally poor people. Women, of course, volunteered in raising this money, and they also gave their time in other areas. They became volunteer firefighters on reservations and did civil defense work, especially as Pacific Coast aircraft spotters. Others sent "care packages" to military members of their tribe, and the Santa Fe Indian Club creatively developed a newsletter that exchanged news between New Mexican Indians scattered throughout the world. A number of tribes held ceremonies for departing soldiers, as Franco reported:

Cheyenne and Arapajo women wove servicemen's names and insignias into blankets. Tribes honored women joining the military as well as men. When a young Sioux woman joined the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps, her family arranged a "Give-Away," a ceremony in which the family gives presents to other tribal members to show their gratitude for her new stature.

The long cultural clash between old and new ways was

obvious in this ceremony that sent soldiers out into the world, and the war brought still more debate on the question of assimilation into the white world. Although it was founded almost entirely by white women, the YWCA had been dealing with assimilation issues for decades, as it reached out to young minority women, especially immigrants. Bertha Eckert was the national YWCA's secretary for Indian work, and after visiting reservations in the Upper Midwest, she predicted a new feminism: "Indian girls are taking eagerly to a chance to earn their own living," she reported. Franco cited Maria Carpenter, a young woman who returned home after working a defense job and found that she "no longer tolerated her father's strict household rules." Lily Laveau, too, said, "I learned how to do things for myself ... how to get along with other people and be out in public ... I have a lot more confidence." White female veterans said the same, and all were akin to Hilda Rogers: she told the *New York Times* for February 6, 1943, "the biggest difference the war made in my life was to know that I was independent and I could do what I wanted to do!"

*See also:* **African-American women; Alaskan women; Army Nurse Corps; artists; bond sales; Chinese-American women; civil defense; cryptography; decorations; draft; enlistment standards; food shortages; home economics; Japanese-American women; motor pools; radio; recruitment; veterans; volunteers; WAVES; Women's Army Corps; YWCA**

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## NAVY NURSE CORPS (NNC)

Founded seven years after the 1901 Army Nurse Corps (ANC), the Navy Nurse Corps followed many ANC precedents. It differed, however, in one especially significant way: the small numbers of registered nurses on Navy ships generally gave them greater status than Army or civilian nurses had in land-based situations. Both corps were all-female, as at the time, “nurse” axiomatically referred to a woman.

Esther Voorhees Hanson was the first director of the of the NNC when it officially began on May 13, 1908. Like the ANC, NNC members were not fully commissioned into the military, but they nonetheless were treated as officers in daily life. Neither corps accepted women who were not already graduates of credentialed nursing schools, which made them virtually the only military personnel who had to pay for their training.

When the grueling experience of nursing school was over, though, the NNC could provide a good life in the 1920s and 1930s. Pay was better than that of the average civilian woman; her housing, food, and uniforms were free; and a military nurse had free medical care, as well as opportunities for travel, further education, and funded retirement. Except in emergencies, they worked eight-hour shifts, and because men always greatly outnumbered men, their status rose in social relationships.



Navy flight nurses Ensign Viola Meining and Lieutenant Thelma Reiling adjust straps for patients' beds on a Naval Air Transport *Skymaster* evacuation plane, Naval Air Station Honolulu, Hawaii. *U.S. Navy Photo, Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

World War II greatly expanded the corps' numbers, while also narrowing and professionalizing the nature of its work. The NNC rose to approximately fourteen thousand members, while the ANC soared from some seven hundred to more than sixty thousand. The work of Navy nurses also became quite different from their colleagues in the Army, as Navy nurses were much more likely to be administrators and teachers. This was because women were not allowed on combat ships, but instead remained far behind the lines on hospital ships or Navy hospitals. Most emergency medical treatment therefore was rendered by male medics—who were taught by Navy nurses. In discussing the differences between the two corps, ANC commander Julia Flikke quoted a War Department medical officer as saying, “the instruction of hospital corpsmen is probably the most important single duty of the Navy nurse.”

Yet even behind the lines on hospital ships marked with the Red Cross, there were dangers. NNC members were issued ID tags made of inflammable metal, in the event that the ship burned. They were forbidden to own cameras or keep diaries, lest the information fall into enemy hands. Radios could not be played because submarines might spot the sound waves, and most mirrors were banned because they would shatter if bombed. “Gas masks and steel helmets,” said a *Ladies Home Journal* article, were “as much at home as powder puffs” in the nurses quarters of ships.

Like the ANC, the NNC began operations in the European Theater of War soon after D-Day; they cared for wounded sailors on troop trains and ships that took them to hospitals in Britain. A few worked in the new field of flight nursing, especially in the Pacific Theater of Operations, (PTO) where they treated injured men on airplanes. One of the first NNC women to do this specialized nursing was Aleda Lutz; initially based in North Africa, she joined other military women in moving on to the European Theater of Operations (ETO) after North Africa was liberated from the Nazis. According to author Emory Massman, Lutz wrote to a friend back home, “My, it seems as if everyone is having babies ... I wonder how I will ever fit in the picture if I ever get back home.” She never had the opportunity to find out: on November 1, 1944, she was on a C-47 and in charge of fifteen wounded men who were going from France to a hospital in Italy. The plane crashed into a mountain, and there were no survivors.

Most flight nurses were in the Army, though, not the Navy, and many more NNC members nursed on hospital ships. These ships could have thousands of men and only a handful of women, so behavior had to be circumspect. Nurses could socialize only with officers—and then only under watchful eyes, with officers invited in a group to the nurses' quarters. This same shortage of women, however, meant that corpsmen did most of the dull routine, while nurses supervised them and handled medical records. More than any other nursing organization, the NNC allowed women the opportunity to ignore the bedpans and be truly professionals.

On the other hand, the Navy was rigid in its demands that nurses fit the stereotype of being not only female, but also



Although they often served on hospital ships, these Navy nurses in the South Pacific are enjoying a picnic onshore. *Courtesy of Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

young, white, and single. Male nurses never were admitted into the wartime NNC, and female nurses over age forty-five were officially excluded; many over age thirty said that they found themselves unofficially excluded. Despite such need that Congress almost drafted nurses with the proposed Nurses Selective Service Act, even graduate nurses were not accepted if they were African American; the first were because of congressional pressure in 1945, when the war almost was over. These black nurses literally could be counted on the fingers of one hand—five among some fourteen thousand who served in the wartime corps.

The Navy also was absurdly dedicated to the single state of its nurses. Although married women were accepted into both the Army Nurse Corps and the Navy's non-nursing corps (WAVES, SPARS, and Women Marines), it was not until 1944—when 80 percent of all women leaving the NNC were forced to go by the regulations on marriage—that the Navy finally permitted its nurses to wed. Still the victory was an incomplete one, as only women already in the NNC were allowed to marry, and applications from married nurses continued to be rejected. In fact, it was Congress—not the NNC's female leadership—that finally forced the inclusion of not only married women, but also blacks, male nurses, and female physicians.

Because of the educational requirements of the NNC, most recruits were old enough that they did not need parental permission to enlist, but signing up nonetheless could be an emotional issue. Linnie Jeffries, for instance, said in archives at the University of Central Arkansas: "My father was sad because I joined. He told me he had 6 sons and 5 of them were wearing the uniform [and] therefore he did not want his daughters to enter." The great need for nurses helped convince him, however, and she joined in January 1944. Her San Diego and Oakland, California, assignments proved the need; she initially got just one day per month off duty.

Other women also endured one-day-off-per-month conditions, but despite such overwork and the continual shortage of nurses, the corps continued to pursue the discipline that long had characterized both the nursing profession and the Navy. Much longer than the Army Nurse Corps—which quickly adopted realistic policies as soon as its nurses were trapped at Bataan early in 1942—the NNC clung to old-fashioned uniforms and enforcement of petty rules. Nurses lived where they worked and had to spend time preparing for ultra-perfect weekly inspections of their quarters. If there were even minor flaws, the entire group lost its weekend passes and had to stay at the hospital. Other regulations, including restrictions on dating, meant that NNC members were expected to live much like nuns, and it was not surprising that recruitment proved difficult.

Like Jeffries, many NNC women served at stateside hospitals. Wounded men would be transported from hospital ships to land-based hospitals, and some nurses accompanied them on hospital trains. Even land-locked Colorado, for example, had an NNC presence, as sailors convalesced at Glenwood Springs. Nurses there lived and worked in a luxurious hotel taken over by the Navy when leisure travel virtually ended with the war's beginning. Many more NNC members were billeted at giant hospitals such as Bethesda Naval Hospital near Washington, D.C. and Chelsea Naval Hospital near Boston. Sailors injured in the Pacific Theater of Operations often recuperated in Hawaii or Australia, and big hospitals on the West Coast were concentrated in the port cities of San Diego, San Francisco, Portland, and Seattle.

The end of the war, of course, brought a dramatic reduction in size, but also recognition of the outstanding work Navy nurses had done. Captain Sue Dauser, who headed the NNC throughout the war, was honored with the Distinguished Service Medal late in 1945. Ann Bernatitus became the only NNC member in World War II to receive the Legion of Merit;



she escaped from the Japanese invasion of Bataan. That was early in the war, and by the time that the Philippines were liberated, the nurses who had spent three years as prisoners of war there ended up with lesser decorations. One of the Navy Nurse POWs, Dorothy Still Danner, published their story forty years after the war's end. Thirteen NNC members who were in the Pacific aboard the *USS Solace* when bombs began to fall in 1942 earned the Purple Heart. Five NNC members captured by the Japanese on Guam also were decorated, as were six who were killed on the *USS Comford*.

Because of such sacrifices, there was little debate when nurses were regularized into the Navy with full rank and status in 1947. A final milestone came in 1972, when Alene Duerk became the first NNC director to achieve the rank of admiral.

**See also:** African-American women; Army Nurse Corps; Bataan; D-Day; European Theater of Operations; Dauser, Sue; decorations; draft; enlistment standards; fatalities; flight nurses; Flikke, Julia; marriage; North Africa; nurses; Nurses Selective Service Bill; Pacific Theater of Operations; pay; physicians; prisoners of war; radio; rank; recruitment; Red Cross; travel; uniforms

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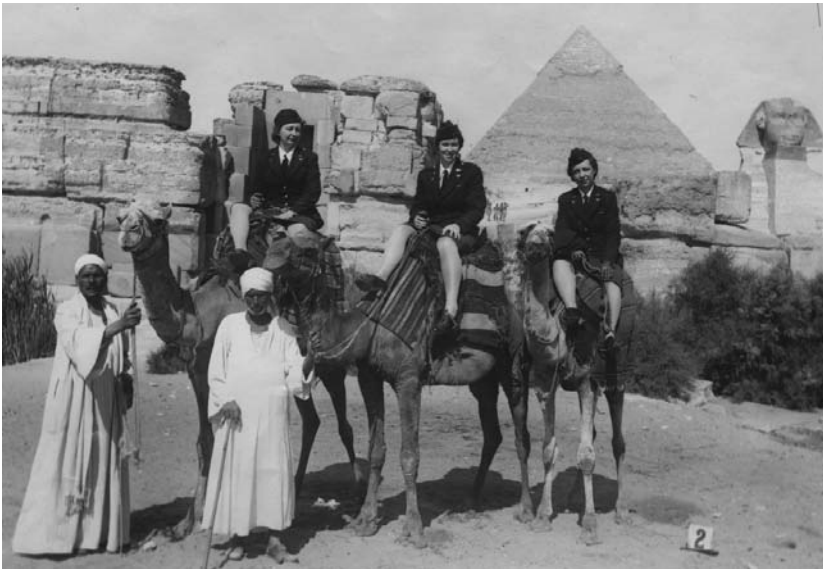
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### NORTH AFRICA

American media focused on Nazi Germany's 1939 invasion of Poland and the fall of France and other northwestern European nations, giving much less attention to simultaneous events in southeastern Europe. At the same time, however, Hitler's major ally, Italy's Benito Mussolini, attacked Greece and other Mediterranean countries; he had done a trial run for the war by conquering North Africa's Ethiopia in already in 1935. In 1940, Italian troops invaded Egypt, a part of the British Commonwealth, and Germany followed up in 1941. Its Field Marshall Erwin Rommel became famous for quickly moving west through North Africa; his army outperformed British troops, and the Allies thus were losing when the United States entered the front.

The Army Nurse Corps (ANC) arrived along with the infantry early in 1942, and the fighting was hard. "In the February push," the chief nurse there told *Saturday Evening Post*, "several of our units were trapped by Germans in front of the lines. The officers wanted to send the nurses back and let the men take their chances..., but the nurses volunteered to stay. They were the last ones to come back." A group at Kasserine Pass in Tunisia's mountains became isolated; among them was First Lieutenant Mary Ann Sullivan, who earned the Legion of Merit for her valor. With German guns at both their front and their rear, they managed to avoid capture—and meanwhile, Sullivan's leadership saved lives. Helen (Pon) Onyett, a Chinese-American woman, later won the Legion of Merit for similar nursing while under fire on the Mediterranean coast.

Like many other aspects of war, these facts remained secret until victory was assured, and so the bravery of nurses was not publicized back home. In the months that followed the debacle at Kasserine Pass, however, nurses marched with soldiers through one bloody battle after another in Libya, Tunisia, and on to Algeria. They slept on bare ground, operated in tents while planes strafed and bombed, and gave their own blood for surgeries. Julia Flikke, who headed the ANC back in Washington, praised them when she published a 1943 book aimed at recruiting more nurses. By then, nurse training had become highly realistic: ANC recruits went to the Desert Training Center on the border of Arizona and California;



During their off-duty time, Army nurses visit the Egyptian pyramids, April 1943. Their legs doubtless were shocking to the camel drivers. *Courtesy of Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

alongside some 200,000 men, they prepared for Africa in 130-degree weather. Physical fitness was not all that nurses needed, and Flikke noted the emotional strength that women largely taught themselves. She quoted one:

War is now to us an Awful Actuality and not something we hear about on the radio. Our friends are being killed—these gay young lads we danced with last week; these fine young men who told us their plans for the future, “when this is all over and the world has stopped being mad.” We don’t discuss their deaths; we pat each other on the shoulder and say, “Well, he’s had it.”

Surgeon General Norman T. Kirk also included North African nurses in an article for *American Magazine*. He particularly spoke of some who had gone through the battles of Tunisia and then were bombed when the front moved to Sicily. She was typical of ANC women: when the North African fight ended on May 11, 1943, nurses immediately went on to Sicily and then to the Italian Peninsula and the European Theater of Operations (ETO). ANC women all over the world were similar, however, and in the history of military women, the genuine significance of the North African campaign was that it marked the first time that a female non-nurse corps served overseas.

The first members of the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) arrived in North Africa just prior to Christmas 1942 after a disastrous trip. Bombed one day out of London, a British destroyer rescued some from the burning ship, while others survived in a lifeboat intended to be “manned” by a violently seasick crewman. Army historian Mattie Treadwell reported that “the women fished five or six men, one badly injured, from the water,” and eventually, filthy and stained with vomit, they finally arrived in Algiers.

They were greeted touchingly by worried generals, who offered oranges, toothbrushes, and a half-used jar of hand cream. Pentagon Chief of Staff George Marshall soon met them, as these WAACs worked as stenographers at the Casa-

blanca Conference in January 1943. When he returned to the United States, he carried a long list of essential items that the women had lost in the shipwreck. When he discovered that there was not yet a legal mechanism for replacement of WAAC needs, he personally paid for new clothing.

These first women were preparing for some five hundred others who began arriving that month, most of whom would be assigned to the Signal Corps. Its purpose is communication, and many WAACs were selected for this precedent-setting overseas assignment because they had trained in radio and telephone operations. Most also were multi-lingual, especially in French, which was very helpful in the French colonies of Algeria and Morocco; one WAAC was a specialist in African dialects. They were assigned to the headquarters of then Lieutenant General Dwight D. Eisenhower, who requested them after observing the efficient work of women in the British military. Later, after censorship rules were lifted, *Radio News* reported that WAACs sat down to work immediately after arrival, “and the next day were still on the job, without let-up, despite the fact that they took less than an hour to rest.”

The *New York Times* described Major General W. B. Smith as “Eisenhower’s right-hand man” and went on to quote Smith’s accolade that phone service improved “100%” after WAACs took over the duty. These jobs called for more than just hard work and a good attitude. Switchboard operators often had to switch languages mid-call, and they had to be personally intelligent and worthy of the greatest trust. Everything they heard was classified, and many male officers were surprised to discover that these women kept secrets better than men. A Signal Corps officer averred of WAACs in North Africa to *Radio News*: “They were fast and they were accurate ... We could have used hundreds more ... Don’t tell me a woman can’t keep a secret.”

A woman featured in a 1943 book, *All-Out Arlene*, was a Signal Corps WAAC who found her voyage to Africa less than pleasant, but maintained a cheerful attitude:

The first day out we were afraid a submarine would sink us. They second day we were afraid it wouldn't.

With waves breaking over the ship, the skipper told us to be careful, "as water is scarce!" It developed that he was referring to fresh water. We could only get two canteenfuls every twenty-four hours, and whatever bathing we did was in cold saltwater.

We were never without our Mae Wests [life jackets] ... We felt dirty, bedraggled, and exhausted the whole way over ...

Jane Pollock's memoir was similar in its determined cheerfulness. She wrote of being one of the first women amid many men in North Africa:

I had no idea I must have terrific appeal ... the way I was rushed. But these ... [men] are so hungry for girls who speak their own language that they will go for a witch if she rides a broom with "USA" on it. We have a couple of [older women who] ... are both rather a strain on the eyes, yet they have been in demand as dance partners ... I got so exhausted that I tried to fake a sprained ankle, but the boy ... said, "Just support yourself on the one good leg, lady, and I'll take care of everything."

More and more WAACs have been arriving..., for which I am grateful ... I've been proposed to by eleven majors, six colonels,... and so many sergeants and privates that I lost count ... but there's been a big decline lately.

These books were intended to recruit other women into the WAAC, and therefore were written to be amusing and dismissive of the genuine stresses of daily life. In fact, the WAACs of North Africa lived with falling bombs: *Reader's Digest* reported that they endured "40 air raids," while official historian Treadwell said merely, "nightly bombings, with brilliant displays of antiaircraft fire, made sleep difficult for the first few weeks." Some were billeted in French hotels, while others slept in tents. Many lived in an abandoned Catholic convent, and their only access to water was an outdoor trough. Desert nights can be cold and they had no heat, but according to *Collier's*, they "washed hair, clothes, and persons in helmets of water carried up several flights of stairs."

They rode in the backs of two-ton trucks to their work stations, the locations of which could be so secret that their own commanding WAAC officers did not know where the switchboards were. They operated from twelve to thirty miles behind the front, often amid the rubble of bombed-out towns—the orders for which may have passed through their own hands. Roused out of bed at 6:00 a.m. for calisthenics, they also had an 8:00 p.m. curfew. Because North Africa is arid, they were allowed to shower only once a week. They worked unceasingly, getting only a half-day off once a week.

Although most worked as phone operators, other WAACs in North Africa were stenographers and file clerks at headquarters. A few worked as cooks and bakers, preparing food for the three shifts of phone and radio operators. Others were assigned to the Air Transport Command; these "Air WACs" maintained planes. A handful worked as lawyers and psychologists, while others drove in motor pools. One

of those, Gladys I. Marson, became the corps' first overseas fatality; she was killed in a jeep accident soon after arriving in Algeria.

Still others worked in the new Central Postal Directory, sorting increasing amounts of mail. As with switchboard operators, male officers discovered these women did the job better than the men they replaced. Treadwell cited two 1943 memos from supervisors: "Since the Waacs have taken over with an entirely different attitude toward the job than the men who had previously handled it, the percentage of errors has decreased materially." The top officer added that when the WAACs arrived:

The office was piled ceiling high [with mail]. These girls came in and took over and worked from 8 a.m. until 9:30 p.m. seven days a week until it was cleared up ... They never thought of asking for time off and I had to order them home at night.

For this rigorous life, they were rewarded back home with slander. Without any basis in fact, *New York Daily News* columnist John O'Donnell wrote that WAACs bound for North Africa were expected to be so promiscuous that they were issued contraceptives. Conservatives who opposed women in the military spread other rumors, including an allegation of widespread illegitimate pregnancies. Congresswoman Edith Nourse Rogers insisted on an investigation, which found that just two WAACs had returned home from North Africa; one of the two was pregnant—by her husband. Army authorities also closed down an Algiers show titled "Swing, Sister Wac, Swing," but its sponsors and audience were almost entirely men: these women, with their 8 p.m. curfew and half-day off per week, found it difficult to "swing."

The right-wing "slander campaign" came at the same time that the WAAC transformed to the WAC, or Women's Army Corps, which meant that women had to re-enlist in the new corps. Some stationed in the United States took this opportunity to leave the Army, but almost no women overseas did so. Unlike most men, they had volunteered for this duty, and their morale was high. In his postwar memoir, Eisenhower not only refuted the slander, but also made it clear how important women's abilities were in modern warfare:

The simple headquarters of a Grant or Lee was gone forever. It was scarcely less than criminal to recruit [headquarters staffers] from needed manpower when great numbers of highly qualified women were available. From the day they reached us, their reputation as an efficient, effective corps continued to grow.

In a 1943 memo reprinted by Treadwell, Allied Air Commander General Ira Eaker included North Africa's WACs when he declared that women "keep more calm than men in emergencies" and were "the best photo interpreters ... keener, and more intelligent than males in this line of work." Lieutenant General Mark Clark commanded the Mediterranean Theater when the North African victory was won, and he eventually awarded numerous decorations to women in this theater, including 134 Bronze Stars.



Beyond the ANC and the WAC, other American women were in North Africa, especially for the Red Cross. Mary Buffum Hamlin published a memoir of her experience working there for the Red Cross; WAC Georgia B. Watson and Army nurses Eugenia Kielar, Ann Stifler Pearce, and Avis D. Schorer have done the same. War correspondent Inez Robb covered that front for the International News Service, and like many of her female colleagues, she ignored official press releases to interview ordinary soldiers. When she returned from Tunisia in 1943, Robb wrote in her syndicated column: "Every soldier you meet—whether he's a flier, an engineer, an infantry man—takes you aside and earnestly informs you that his outfit is the best darn outfit over there and the one that's winning the war." Together, the Allies won—more than two years prior to other fronts.

That it did not mean it was over, though, as ANC members and many WACs, especially those in the Signal Corps, moved on to warfare further north. Victory ironically actually meant that even more WACs arrived in North Africa, however, especially Air WACs. Assigned to four widely separated stations in 1944, they refueled and repaired planes for battles in Italy and beyond. Letters from home continued to be sorted in North Africa and other missions were fulfilled there, especially in supply distribution. Additional reinforcements brought the total number of WACs in North Africa in 1944 to approximately two thousand; it was the third-largest overseas theater for WACs, second only to the ETO and the Pacific Theater of Operations.

**See also:** Air WAC; Army Nurse Corps; British women; censorship; Chinese-American women; correspondents, war; decorations; European Theater of Operations; fatalities; Flikke, Julia O.; letter writing; males, comparisons with; motor pools; Pacific Theater of Operations; radio; recreation; recruitment; Red Cross; Signal Corps; "slander campaign"; travel; Women's Army Corps

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## NORTON, MARY TERESA HOPKINS (1875–1951)

One of the first women in Congress after the 19th Amendment enfranchised all American women in 1920, Mary Norton was elected from New Jersey in 1924. She was the first congresswoman from an eastern state and the first Democrat not preceded by her husband. By World War II, she had risen to a position of appreciable power.

Norton's only child died young, and she fell into her political career by doing good things for other mothers and children. A Catholic, she supported the child nursery that her church ran for working women, and when there was a coal shortage during World War I, she went to Jersey City politico Frank Hagan for fuel. When women got the vote three years later, he urged her to run for freeholder, the state's equivalent of county commissioner. According to Eleanor Roosevelt, Hagan said to Norton: "You'll like it. You can run the poor farm and the orphans' home."

She won that 1922 election, and he encouraged her to move up to Congress in 1924. When she replied that she "didn't know anything about Congress," his answer was, "neither do most congressmen." Again, she won easily, which set the pace for the future: Mary T. Norton never lost any of her fourteen elections.

Democrats were in the congressional minority in the 1920s, and the Republican leadership appointed her to the House Labor Committee—something that they considered unimportant, but mattered greatly to her blue-collar constituents. Revision of labor law was hugely important when Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal came to power in 1932, and by 1937, she had risen in the House seniority system to chair the committee.

Norton also chaired the House Committee on the District of Columbia from 1932 to 1937. This was another bottom-of-the-basement assignment that the majority party gave her when she first was elected, but instead of emulating other members of Congress by trying to get off it, she championed equality for the District's non-voting residents with such vigor that she became known as the "first woman mayor of Washington."

Like Eleanor Roosevelt and other progressive women of the era, she opposed the Equal Rights Amendment because it would nullify protective labor laws for women. Instead, Norton worked for an equal pay law and, especially dur-

ing and immediately after the war, for government-funded child care. Although those did not succeed, she chaired the House Labor Committee when most of the economic legislation that protects people today was enacted: working with Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins, Congress passed the Social Security Act, minimum wage and maximum hour laws, and many other fundamental reforms that support a viable middle class.

All of this not only was vital to preventing strikes during World War II, but also produced long-term stability by legislating an acknowledged role for unions, as well as revolutionizing managerial behavior. When the war came, Norton's leadership of the House Labor Committee was influential in increasing the size of a labor force made up of willing and competent workers; their productivity in defense industries was key to victory. She helped adopt policies that controlled the inflation that comes with war, and she led the committee in planning for labor's transition to the postwar era. Norton was part of a group of progressive, thoughtful, hardworking congresswomen of both parties who worked well together, including Frances Bolton, Hattie Caraway, Florence Kahn, Margaret Chase Smith, and Edith Nourse Rogers.

Mary T. Norton (whose name always appeared that way) had not gone to college because her father did not believe in educating girls. She did go to secretarial school and supported herself in New York until marrying at age thirty-four. Her husband stayed so far in the background, however, that when he died ten years after her election to Congress, many of her colleagues were surprised to discover that she had not been a widow when elected.

After serving for a quarter of a century, she announced that she would not run for re-election in 1950. She was seventy-five, and the House increasingly was coming under the control of Republicans who threatened her position and priorities. She received many honors, but found no publisher for the autobiography that she wrote in retirement. Mary T. Norton merits more recognition than she gets from today's working women: she was a leader in the revolution that moved the economy from Depression era intimidation of workers to the creation of a modern labor force, a labor force that built the materiel that won the war.

**See also:** Bolton, Frances; Caraway, Hattie; child care; defense industries; employers/employment changes; Equal Rights Amendment; inflation; Kahn, Florence; labor force; pay; Perkins, Frances; Rogers, Edith Nourse; Roosevelt, Eleanor; Smith Margaret Chase; strikes; unions

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### NURSES/NURSING

The roots of these words derive from a Latin verb meaning "to nourish." Because women are the first nourishers of infants, they have been seen as natural nurses since prehistoric times.

All nursing was home nursing for most of the first two centuries of American history. Even after the first charity hospital was built in Philadelphia in 1751, hospitals were thought of as a dumping ground for the unwanted. The modern hospital would not emerge for more than a century, as well through the 1800s, hospitals were seen primarily as asylums for the mentally ill and/or workhouses for chronically ill indigents. Middle-class families feared that medical students practiced on hospital patients and did their best to avoid them. Nursing was not quite respectable for young ladies, and affluent families were shocked when occasionally a Florence Nightingale chose to enter the field. They would not dream of sending their loved ones to a hospital, but instead hired physicians who made house calls. He brought in private-duty nurses, who often moved into the home and tended one patient, not the many who needed care in the general public. Nurses carried out doctor's orders and often lacked personal knowledge of physiology or medicine; many knew only what their associated physician bothered to teach them. Wealthy people thought of their private nurses as little more than glorified servants.

Even after nursing schools developed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the women who attended them were disrespected and exploited. Almost all nursing schools were associated with hospitals, not colleges, and student nurses worked in these hospitals without pay. Because of this free labor, too many hospitals were motivated to create too many nursing schools, many of which lacked a decent curriculum. Even after graduation, nurses were expected to live much like cloistered nuns: they were to stay unmarried and live in "nurses' homes" on hospital grounds, where they were to be available at all hours. Too often, they also had to perform menial chores such as scrubbing floors.

World War II completely changed that. Americans already were becoming accustomed to improved health care, partly because of the attention to public health in World War I, when a shocking proportion of young men could not pass the military's physical examinations. The 1921 Sheppard-Towner Act, which provided for free maternal and infant care in nurse-run clinics, was a priority of the new League of Women Voters. Congress repealed it when the economy crashed in 1929, but New Deal programs in the 1930s continued the trend towards better public health. No longer fearful of experts, people sought medical attention for problems that



Her cap indicates that this physical therapist is a registered nurse.  
*Courtesy of Women in Military Service For America, Inc.*

they would have ignored a generation earlier. The result was a nursing shortage even before the war began.

When soldiers and their families began to assume their right to decent health care, and when hundreds of thousands of soldiers returned home sick or injured, the sheer quantitative increase in patient load focused attention on nursing and gave the profession an importance it never had in the past. This was confirmed in 1943, when Congress put millions of dollars into the Bolton Bill with the aim of educating more nurses—at public expense. Except for home economics, federal funding was unprecedented for an occupation dominated by women, and nursing reached a level of status never before achieved. The demand for nurses meant that they no longer were willing to accept bed and board as payment, which many had done in the Great Depression. They liberated themselves from hospital-owned nurses' homes, and the married nurse—a rarity before the war—became commonplace.

Because marriage often meant an end to a nurse's employment, so many had been pushed out of the profession that the National Nursing Council began a search for inactive nurses in 1942. The media cooperated with stories such as *Good Housekeeping's* "We are Trying to Find One Hundred Thousand Women" and "Needed: 50,000 Nurses" in the Sunday magazine of the *New York Times*. In addition to retraining retired nurses, the U.S. Public Health Service announced its intention of recruiting fifty-five thousand new nursing students in 1942; the next year, the goal was raised by ten thousand. By 1944, the nation needed sixty-five thousand nurses for the military and three hundred thousand for civilian hospitals—one hundred thousand more than were currently credentialed.

In his 1945 State of the Union speech, President Franklin Roosevelt said that the nurse-patient ratio within the United States was 26–1 instead of the recommended 15–1. Long before this speech, the Red Cross, the Office of Civil Defense, and other agencies pleaded for help with the patient load, asking women to volunteer as nurses' aides at local hospitals. Aides were recruited in even in obscure magazines,

with articles such as *Hygeia's* "More Hands for the Nurse!" and *Science Newsletter*, which ran a story titled "Patients Are Turned Away Because of Nurse Shortage." The Red Cross implemented courses to train unpaid nurses' aides; it and other agencies also developed classes in home nursing so that women could be capable of returning to their mothers' generation, where the sick were nursed at home. Midwives of the past were not encouraged to return, but pregnant women nonetheless were strongly encouraged to call their doctor and deliver babies at home without any assistance from a nurse. The extent to which women's reproductive lives were controlled by outside forces is clear in that during the postwar era, the delivery standard became at least a week in the hospital.

Both the return to home-based practices and the recruitment of volunteer aides arguably constituted something of a retreat in the status of nursing. In addition, progressive nurses often had to fight their own internal leadership, many of whom had no objections to living much like nuns. Both Edith Aynes and her boss, Army Nurse Corps (ANC) Director Florence Blanchfield were conservatives who found it hard to give up old ways. ANC leadership had to be pushed into modifying uniforms, for example, and those changes were made only because starched white dresses and caps clearly were not possible in jungle warfare. Aynes also said that "old-timers" disapproved of congressional authorization for paid nurses' aides in the military corps. She approvingly cited the decision of some two hundred ANC women who declined promotion when the War Department finally regularized the rank of nurses with others in the military. Aynes cited Nell Close, chief nurse with the Army Air Corps, as saying that such changes meant that "the Nurse Corps was losing some of its unique dignity."

Similar conservatives, especially in the Navy Nurse Corps, continued their bias against minorities, especially African-American women. Black nurses were handicapped from the beginning, as they had much less access to nursing schools. *Service*, a magazine aimed at blacks that used the era's persistent morale-building tone, reported cheerfully in 1945—in the same month that the war ended—"there are now 50 [nursing] schools that accept Negro students." That averaged only about one per state, and in the context of the need, was shameful. At a time when there were more than sixty-one thousand nursing students, the magazine was pleased to report that "approximately 2,000 Negro girls enrolled in schools of nursing during the last year," a mere 3 percent of the total.

Moreover, black women who were credentialed nurses were underutilized. Already in the war's first year, an Ohio congressman declared: "I have letters from many Negro nurses in my district and state, college graduates who are desirous of serving their country ... Yet they are not permitted to do so for one reason or another. Their applications have been on file for a long time." His words were reprinted in *Opportunity*, then the most successful magazine for blacks, and others echoed his valid point.



Army nurses Second Lieutenant Prudence Burns, left, and Second Lieutenant Eleena Townscent tend to a patient, 286th Station Hospital, Base A, Milne Bay, New Guinea, June 22, 1944. Hospital wards were racially segregated throughout the war, with black nurses caring only for black soldiers.  
*Courtesy of the National Archives*



The nation's first credentialed black nurse was Mary Mahoney, a Bostonian who graduated from a pioneer nursing school in 1879. She co-founded the National Association of Colored Graduate Nurses in 1908; during World War II, it was led by Mabel K. Staupers, who worked hard to change the status of black nurses. Indeed, it was Staupers' November 1944 meeting with Eleanor Roosevelt that probably motivated the Navy Nurse Corps to admit black nurses in 1945. Mary Mahoney's experience of integrated education remained unusual, however, as most nursing schools and hospitals continued to be segregated. The all-white ANA did not merge with Staupers' association until 1948, and even then, many state affiliates barred black nurses. Segregation also was the rule in the military, where black nurses cared for black soldiers—and prisoners of war, which was intended as an insult to the injured POW, who probably accepted the racism that is fundamental to fascism.

Overall, though, the nursing profession greatly benefited from the war, especially in better education and pay. In addition to the Bolton Act, the new Office of Scientific Research and Development funded many improvements to save lives, and nurses learned new techniques with oxygen administration, x-rays, physical therapy, and other procedures and medications, especially penicillin shots. Ability in these new areas, which older nurses often did not know, naturally empowered younger women within nursing organizations, and their new knowledge certainly improved nurses' public image. No longer mop and bedpan brigades, they instead were professionals capable of using the latest technology.

Tens of thousands, including black nurses, went overseas. The new specialty of flight nursing proved nurses to be extremely successful in emergencies without any physician nearby. Nurses repeatedly showed valor, and many earned military decorations. Some gave their lives, while others endured prisoner-of-war camps, especially those caught in the

Japanese invasion of Bataan. Even the attempt to draft nurses, the Nurses Selective Service Bill of 1945, added to their prestige as essential to victory. Millions of men, including male physicians and top officials in the Office of the Surgeon General, observed these remarkably dedicated and skilled women—and found a new respect for all women.

*See also:* **African-American women; American Nurses' Association; Army Nurse Corps; Bataan; Bolton Act; Cadet Nurse Corps; decorations; fatalities; flight nurses; home economics; home nursing; hospitals; League of Women Voters; magazines; marriage; Navy Nurse Corps; Nurses Selective Service Bill; pay; postwar; pregnancy; rank; Red Cross; Roosevelt, Eleanor; scientific research and development; volunteers**

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## NURSES SELECTIVE SERVICE BILL OF 1945

In 1940, the Army Nurse Corps consisted of a mere seven hundred women; by April 1941, well before the United States entered World War II, the corps was enlisting nearly that many in a single month. As the war went on, the nation's hospitals had tens of thousands of nursing vacancies. Despite legislation such as the Bolton Act and programs such as the Cadet Nurse Corps, this shortage continued to worsen. Women in both the Army Nurse Corps and Navy Nurse Corps served to the point of damaging their own health; some died or were permanently disabled because they worked too hard too long.

President Franklin D. Roosevelt therefore used his State of the Union speech on January 6, 1945, to bring attention to the shortage. He said that recruiting goals were so far from being met that eleven hospital units recently had been sent overseas without any nurses. More than a thousand nurses were hospitalized, many of them due to exhaustion. "It is tragic that the gallant women who have volunteered for service as nurses should be so overworked," the president said. Because "the need is too pressing to await the outcome of further efforts at recruiting," he called for Congress amend the Selective Service Act "to provide for the induction of nurses into the Armed Forces." Nurses, of course, were assumed to be female in this era—and this marked the only time in American history that Congress seriously considered using its constitutional power to draft women along with men.

Although it was a tremendously important precedent, the war was so intense that the vast majority of Americans did not notice this key impact on women's history. Instead, they focused on the immediate need and basically said, "why not?" A Gallup poll in early February reported that 78 percent of the public believed there was indeed a severe shortage of nurses, and an overwhelming 73 percent agreed that they should be drafted. Mailed ballots on the question also showed the leadership of both the American Association of University Women and the Business and Professional Women (BPW) endorsed the bill, and a BPW spokeswoman wrote about it in the organization's publication, *Independent Woman*. On March 5, 1945, Kentucky Democrat Andrew May introduced House Resolution 2277 to amend draft law to include nurses.

Representative May, however, was the only male sponsor of major wartime legislation directly related to women. The 1942 bill that created the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) was sponsored by Edith Nourse Rogers, while Margaret Chase Smith led authorization for the Navy's female units. Frances Bolton was Congress' top expert on nurses, but although she did not object to the bill, neither did she take the lead on it—possibly because she was a Republican and it was so clearly in response to the request of a Democratic president. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt had urged some sort of national service for women already in 1941, and by the end of the decade, Bolton would come to that view, too. Even feminists were shocked by Bolton's 1949 article for *American Magazine*, "Why Women Should Be Drafted."

HR 2277 received prompt and thorough consideration, with committee hearings during a two-week period and debate on the House floor for a good portion of three days. Discussion generally centered on technicalities, not the precedent being set. Very unlike the 1942 debate on the forming the WAAC, the premise of this 1945 debate was that women would have to be drafted, and attention centered on how the conscription should be implemented. Beginning date, geographical quotas, appeal procedures, and military rank were the topics of discussion, not the tremendous change in the historical status of women. No congressmen offered the platitudes about "women's place" that had been plentiful in the WAAC debate.

Most lawmakers said that they regretted imposing a draft, but their regrets centered on upon the fact that the draftees were *nurses*, not that they were *women*. The American Nurses' Association (ANA) and the National Nursing Council reinforced this view. ANA representatives testified that their position was to "approve, in principle, federal Selective Service legislation"—while also urging passage of a national service act such as the earlier Austin-Wadsworth Bill that would have drafted women for defense jobs. Their point, which certainly was valid, was that nurses had done more for the war than any female-dominated profession and that singling them out for a draft appeared insulting.

Those who opposed the bill gave reasons other than the fact that it was women who were being considered for the draft. There were Republican charges that it was another Roosevelt power grab; there were fears that exposing young women to the draft would make them less willing to go into nursing. There were vehement and justifiable attacks on the War Department for mismanagement of recruiting and especially on the underutilization of black and male nurses, as well as female physicians.

Although votes on amendments were close, the House

approved the final version of the Nurses Selective Service Act by a wide margin, 347–42, in early March. In early April, the Senate Military Affairs Committee reported the bill favorably, with their only major change being to strike the exemption that the House had given to married women. In early May, however, the war ended in the European Theater of Operations, and with V-E Day, the "pressing need" for the legislation had passed.

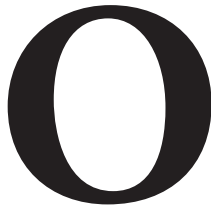
The bill nonetheless marked a significant precedent. The House adopted it by a large majority; the relevant Senate committee endorsed and even strengthened it; the president surely would have signed it. All indications are that if the European war had lasted another month or two, American women would have been drafted. The legislation showed that, contrary to the arguments of opponents of the Equal Rights Amendment, there is no constitutional protection of women from conscription. Both the president and the Congress assumed that they had the authority to draft citizens without respect to gender.

**See also:** African-American women; American Nurses' Association; Army Nurse Corps; Austin-Wadsworth Bill; Bolton Act; Bolton, Frances; Cadet Nurse Corps; draft; Equal Rights Amendment; European Theater of Operations; hospitals; Navy Nurse Corps; nurses; physicians; recruitment; Rogers, Edith Nourse; Roosevelt, Eleanor; Smith, Margaret Chase; underutilization; V-E Day; Women's Army Auxiliary Corps

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## OCCUPIED GERMANY

The Allies might well have lost the war but for Hitler's megalomania with his 1940 invasion of Russia, which meant that his Germany had battle fronts on its both east and west. To his surprise, Russians withstood the bitter siege of Stalingrad, and then the Red Army spent the next two years battling the Nazis back to Berlin. United Press correspondent Ann Stringer was the first to report that Russian troops had crossed the Elbe; Berlin fell a week later; and Germany formally surrendered on May 7, 1945. Lyn Crost, Lee Miller, Patricia Lockridge, and famed Margaret Bourke-White were other reporters who reached Germany while evidence of genocide still was fresh. In "An Army Nurse at Dachau," Ann Franklin joined other women who witnessed to the world of barely alive concentration camp survivors and of piles of human beings treated as trash.

Faced with loss, many Germans tried to flee from Soviet soldiers and towards the Allied armies. Some were surprised not only by the presence of African-American soldiers, but even Jewish ones. Author Deborah Dash Moore told of two Jewish-American soldiers who enjoyed a long conversation with a well-educated German woman who "rambled on all about the threat of communism ... and what a poor country Germany is, and how hard its people have always had to work, and how she couldn't understand why no one shows any sympathy for the German nation." When they inquired about Germany's treatment of Jews and revealed that they were, in fact, Jewish, "her face paled, and ... she vanished."

Nor were Germans who fled from Russians fleeing communism: instead, their fears were much more personal. They knew that Russians would be seeking revenge for Stalingrad, where upwards of a million Russians died, as well as for

German rapes of Russian women. Although Soviet leader Joseph Stalin ostensibly ordered the Red Army not to rape, gang rapes of German women were massive. The author of *Diary of a Woman in Berlin* remains anonymous: decades after the war, this multi-lingual publishing house executive did not want her identity known because, like almost all of the women she knew, she had been repeatedly raped. To stop the physical pain of gang rapes, she finally sought exclusive liaisons with officers, who also could provide food for her starving household—and to keep the soldiers in her bedroom, as it was not unusual for rapes to occur in the presence of husbands and children.

Historian Antony Beevor confirmed the diarist and quoted a report to Moscow by a Russian: "all German women in East Prussia who stayed behind were raped by Red Army soldiers..., [including] gang rapes of girls ... as young as twelve and old women." That, he said, was motivated by revenge, but by the time the army reached Berlin, the behavior was "more as a casual right of conquest than a target of hate." Berlin women nonetheless suffered greatly, with estimates as high as 130,000 rapes during the first days.

Relatively few German men were in Berlin, and many of those who had returned from warfare had to stay hidden because of their past political or military affiliations. Young girls, too, were hidden in attics and basements to keep soldiers from knowing of their presence. Older women went out only early in the morning, when drunken soldiers would be asleep, for essential water, which had to be obtained at public hand-pumps, as there had been no electricity for weeks. About ten thousand women died as a result of rape; most were suicides, but others were from irreparable damage to reproductive organs and subsequent infections, including venereal disease.

## OCCUPIED GERMANY

Beever said that “around 90 per cent of victims who became pregnant obtained abortions,” and “many ... who did give birth abandoned the child.” In comparison, American men behaved much better, but some also were rapists. According to historian Petra Goedde, “rape allegations in the American-occupied area rose dramatically in the early months of 1945,” going from 18 in January to 402 in May. “Of those cases, between a quarter and a half were brought to trial and again between a third and a half of those ended in convictions.”

Female Soviet soldiers also marched into Germany, but there is little evidence that they tried to stop their male colleagues from raping. Most, however, seem to have been less cruel and covetous than men: while male Russians often were seen with watches from wrist to elbow (including dainty women’s watches), female soldiers did not appear to confiscate personal goods to the same degree. Red Army women directed German women who were forced to clean up the devastation of bombs and artillery, but according to the anonymous diarist, the Russian women treated their work as a job more than as a personal vendetta or opportunity for graft. On the other hand, some were capable of harshness towards the men under their command: Red Cross employee Violet Kochendoerfer told of a Soviet “woman officer” who “disciplined a Russian soldier by whipping him across the face with her Sam Brown belt.”

Allied armies, of course, came from the west and had liberated France, Belgium, the Netherlands, and more before reaching Germany. The Low Countries were quickly conquered by Germany early in 1940, but France’s surrender had been much more complex, and its ostensible wartime government was composed of French fascists whose capital was not Paris, but Vichy, in the south of France. In 1944, when the Vichy government began to fall to the D-Day invasion from the north and Allies from the south, who came via North Africa and Italy, French women who had collaborated with fascists found themselves in serious trouble. Some estimates put the number of French women executed by Free French forces as high as 30 percent of about ten thousand total. Author Hanna Diamond said: “In Toulouse, for example, a 17-year-old girl who had been the mistress of the head of the local Gestapo had her head shaved, was paraded around the town with swastikas drawn on her chest and back and was later executed.”

American women rarely witnessed such scenes, but both the longtime Army Nurse Corps and the newer American Women’s Army Corps (WAC) had been part of the European Theater of Operations from the beginning. There was doubt of their abilities when WACs first were assigned there, but it quickly faded as some eight thousand WACs proved themselves. At V-E Day, Army historian Mattie Treadwell said:

When in the spring of 1945..., headquarters opened in Heidelberg and Wiesbaden, no one debated whether or not to take Wacs to Germany; they moved with their headquarters as a matter of course. After V-E Day, only a handful of Wacs were left in England; the majority came to be concentrated in Germany at Berlin, Frankfurt, Wiesbaden,



Unidentified Army nurse captain and medical officer, Headquarters, Displaced Persons Center 113, Germany, 1945. American women serving with the Public Health Service were also assigned duty to these displaced persons centers in Occupied Europe. *Courtesy of Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

Heidelberg, and other headquarters ... Living became luxurious in comparison to wartime billets ...

In Frankfurt, they were housed in a well-heated apartment building..., and ate at an excellent mess boasting small tables and tablecloths, with [German] civilians to do all but supervisory work. In Weisbaden, women lived in cold but comfortable apartments ... Visiting War Department inspectors late in 1945 reported that “with few exceptions, these Wacs were living under better conditions and with more comforts than it was possible to have during the war.”

Indeed, during the winter of 1944–45, many WACs had shivered in tents surrounded by snow. Their situation and that of German women reversed the following year, as the winter of 1945–46 was the worst time ever for Germans. Many civilians, especially those in the eastern area controlled by Soviets, died of hunger and exposure. The most obvious strategy for German women, especially the young, was to ease

their misery by “fraternizing” with American men and hope to become a war bride. This was especially true because so many German men had been killed that the marriageable-age ratio was five women for three men—and many of those men were disabled. Ann Schade told Goedde that “during three years working for the American military government in Frankfurt, ‘I never met a [marriageable] German man.’”

Other civilian women also worked for the occupation government, especially those who could speak both English and German. A few American women went to Germany explicitly to work for the Allied Military Government. Jane Steele Brannon, for example, was a lawyer who worked for War Crimes Commission. According to her hometown newspaper in Tampa, Florida, the forty-something woman was a “90-pound bit of feminine dynamite” and relished this opportunity to prosecute former fascists. Being both older and a lawyer, she said that American soldiers often asked her for advice: they “came to me for everything—love affairs, allotment papers, insurance problems—anything for an excuse, I decided, to just talk to an American woman.”

She spent much of her two years living in a lovely villa near the Yugoslavian border, and she both Red Cross worker Violet Kochendoerfer were somewhat embarrassed by the comfortable life that they were encouraged to lead in the midst of postwar starvation. Assigned to housing in confiscated property, they enjoyed servants, food and laundry service, and more. With the war over, Kochendoerfer and her Red Cross co-worker, Louise Smith, could fly as the only passengers in planes that had been used by top officers, cozy in “the generals’ big, soft, upholstered seats.” She worked in Germany through August of 1947, mostly in Bavaria, where she lived in the confiscated estate of a doctor’s widow. Much later, she wrote: “I felt better when I received a letter from Frau Furstenberg, saying that the best years of the war and postwar for her were when the Red Cross girls lived in her house.”

**See also: Army Nurse Corps; Bourke-White, Margaret, correspondents, war; European Theater of Operations; food; postwar; rationing; Red Cross; Russian women; pregnancy; V-E Day; venereal disease; war brides; Women’s Army Corps**

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## OCCUPIED JAPAN

When World War II ended, there were some five thousand members of the Women’s Army Corps in Pacific Theater of Operations (PTO). Earlier in the war, larger numbers had gone to North Africa and to the European Theater of Operations (ETO) at the request of top commander Dwight D. Eisenhower. Douglas MacArthur held the equivalent position in the PTO and was much less enthusiastic about having women in his command—and therefore in occupied Japan, of which he was the supreme commander. His military elitism (a habit encouraged by his mother, who had moved to West Point when he was a cadet there) accepted the Army Nurse Corps, which had existed since 1901, as a proper place for women—but he doubtless was embarrassed that he had been the world’s first military commander who knowingly abandoned female commissioned officers to become prisoners of war. Famously saying, “I shall return,” MacArthur ceded the Philippines to the Japanese in the spring of 1942—and left both Army and Navy nurses behind, along with thousands of men whose fate was the Bataan Death March. He rehabilitated his career, however, and when the war ended with V-J Day in 1945, held much more individual power than anyone in the comparable occupation of Germany.

Of the five thousand WACs who had proved themselves in the South Pacific, only about two hundred went on to occupied Japan—and then as civilians. An important factor in





Army nurses Lieutenants Megan Hughes and Dorothy Ackerly and an American Red Cross worker, all assigned to the 76th Station Hospital, walk among the ruins of Sendai, Japan, October 18, 1945. *Courtesy of the National Archives*

this was that, because WACs in the PTO never were as well supported as others, they were much more eager to go home. According to official historian Mattie Treadwell, 82 percent of Air WACs in the Far East Command wanted to leave as soon as possible, compared with just 5 percent in Italy. Most WACs in the PTO were eligible for discharge under demobilization plans, and Treadwell concluded:

These [factors] effectively prevented WAC employment in the Army of Occupation in Japan. It was the theater's verdict that it would not be worthwhile to prepare housing and move the units to Japan ... A computation of point scores for discharge eligibility showed that by the end of 1945 all but 500 of the Pacific's Wacs would be eligible for return ...

The War Department also refused to allow the Pacific theater to keep discharge-eligibles who volunteered to remain. Extensions and exceptions were given to the European and China theaters, so that their volunteer Wacs were not forced to return; no such extension was allowed in the Pacific ... Colonel [Mary-Agnes] Brown believed an extension should have been granted, but was not called on to comment in the matter.

It is not terribly surprising that MacArthur and the War

Department did not seek advice from Brown, who headed the WAC in the Pacific, but the decision also ignored advice from much higher-ranking PTO officers. Treadwell continued: "Many section chiefs, as well as Colonel Brown, felt that refusal to permit WAC volunteers to be retained was unwarranted and deprived them of needed office help." One, Major General Wilhelm Syter, even creatively proposed assigning the rank of warrant officer to all WACs as a way out of the bureaucratic bog, but was rejected. In the end, all WACs were demobilized from the Pacific early in 1946, and the approximately two hundred who volunteered for duty in occupied Japan were civilian employees.

Members of both the Army Nurse Corps and the Navy Nurse Corps, however, would serve in both occupied Japan and in its former satellite, Korea. Julia Parrish Sadler was young: she graduated from nursing school in March 1945, joined the ANC, and arrived in the Pacific as the war was ending. She told Patricia Sewell of her particularly difficult voyage, when she suffered a ruptured appendix between Manila and Saipan:

No relatives, no close friends, I felt quite alone. They tried to lower me in a net to a small boat to take me to Manila, but decided the water was too rough and brought me back up. We arrived, after a terrifying typhoon in the Yellow Sea, at Seoul, Korea, in December '45. We lived in old, wooden barracks which had no plumbing. We took cold showers, but there was always a guard nearby. The little Korean children loved us and would follow us everywhere.

Alene Duerk of the Navy Nurse Corps also was young and still was at sea when the Japanese surrendered on V-J Day. Other "ships rang bells and shot guns into the air," she said, but "aboard the *Benevolence*, the news was received in a much quieter way." They continued on to Yokohama, where the ship was the first to welcome prisoners of war—including women—who had been held captive in Japan. One quick trip on land was more than enough for Duerk, and she wrote to her Ohio mother: "I cannot begin to describe the utter ruin of Yokohama. There is nothing left of the city. It is unbelievable."

The most influential American woman in postwar Japan was not actually there. The Office of War Information somewhat belatedly hired Columbia University anthropologist Ruth Benedict in 1943 for advice on enemy peoples: she had pioneered cultural relativism and coined the word "racism" in *Race: Science and Politics* (1939). Her study of Japan, *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword: Patterns of Japanese Culture* (1946), became extremely useful to Americans who knew very little about Asians, especially about the Japanese. While China had a long history of international exchange, Japan had allowed entry to only a few Westerners. Most Americans lacked any understanding of its culture and were particularly perplexed by *kamikaze* pilots and other aspects of wartime behavior. At the base of Japanese beliefs, Benedict and others explained, was submission to authority: if their emperor, whom they believed to be divine, was not harmed, the Japanese would be willing to follow orders. Democracy,

including a higher status for women, effectively was imposed by dictatorship.

Ellen Woodward, one of the first outsiders to see the emperor, described him as “a timid little man obviously nervous over all that is going on about him.” According to historian Toshio Nishi, she was one of the four women in a twenty-four member committee of educators who visited Japan under the aegis of the State Department to revise its school curriculum. Woodward headed Georgia’s school system and Pearl Wannamaker held the equivalent position in the State of Washington; the other two were Virginia Gildersleeve, who was involved in many wartime causes and was dean of Barnard College, as well as Mildred McAfee Horton, who had returned to the presidency of Wellesley College after heading the WAVES. The U.S. Education Mission made many recommendations after three weeks in Japan, but given its charge of changing the society’s omnipotent patriarchy—and its own 20:4 ratio of men to women—the State Department seriously underutilized female ability.

Eileen Donovan probably had the most direct and official influence: in charge of women’s education for the occupation, she started at the top, with the Imperial Palace. Elizabeth Gray Vining, a New Hampshire widow and author, was chosen as the tutor for Crown Prince Akihito. The emperor and empress were so happy with Vining’s work that Nishi said “the Empress ... desired that the Prince receive a university education abroad.” Showa Empress was more progressive than MacArthur, who feared for the prince’s safety and vetoed the idea. Vining’s tutoring, however, made the next emperor both fluent in English and aware of the world outside Japan.

Political scientist Arthur Oppler was part of the team that changed Japanese law and government, and he credited his wife, Charlotte Oppler, for much influence on Japanese women. In the unequal nature of both Japan and America at the time, she was not paid for her work, but she established clubs for young mothers and later, a co-educational group for college students. Both aimed to give young people the courage to break away from the traditional “house system,” in which age mattered almost as much as gender. All marriages were arranged marriages in prewar Japan, for example, and a man could not marry without parental permission until he was thirty.

Prewar Japan had some small attempts at feminism, including the League for Women’s Suffrage that began in 1924. These groups were suppressed as fascism rose in the 1930s, however, and the most prominent postwar feminist probably was Beate Sirota Gordon. Her parents were Jews who immigrated to Japan during the Russian revolution that grew out of World War I, and she grew up there in the 1920s and 1930s before going to college in the United States. She returned to Japan soon after the war ended; Mire Koikari quoted Gordon’s description of approaching Tokyo:

Charred ruins and solitary chimneys ... stood from the bare earth like nails ... I knew beyond a doubt that the Japanese were finished. The soldiers on the plane whistled and flocked

to the windows, exulting openly, but I felt numb with shock. We were all American citizens assigned to the General Headquarters of Supreme Commander Allied Power, where General Douglas MacArthur was directing the occupation, but at the moment I was brought up short by the differences between us. To me, Japan meant home, the country where I had been brought up.

An educated, bilingual American citizen, Gordon was the only woman on the team who participated in drafting Japan’s new constitution. The legal code was amended to grant women the vote soon after the war ended, on December 17, 1945, and women enthusiastically participated in elections the following year. They voted at nearly the same rate as men, and according to Oppler, “thirty-eight female members were elected to the Lower House on April 10, 1946, among them the pioneer feminist, Mrs. Kato Shizue, former Baroness Ishimoto.” Thousands of years of restrictive tradition was overturned in a matter of months.

*See also:* **Air WACs; Army Nurse Corps; Bataan; Benedict, Ruth; Brown, Mary-Agnes; Chinese-American women; demobilization; European Theater of Operations; Gildersleeve, Virginia; Japanese-American women; McAfee, Mildred; Navy Nurse Corps; North Africa; Office of War Information; occupied Germany; Pacific Theater of Operations; postwar; prisoners of war; underutilization; V-J Day; WAVES; Women’s Army Corps**

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## OFFICE OF PRICE ADMINISTRATION (OPA)

The Office of Price Administration (OPA) merged with extant federal agencies dealing with the economy to begin on January 30, 1942. This was less than two months after Pearl Harbor, but that was long enough to demonstrate the need for price controls and rationing. On the days after U.S. entry into the war, countless affluent Americans raided stores, stocking up on imports that they reasonably expected would become scarce. Many remembered shortages in World War I, and they filled their pantries with non-perishable imports such as olive oil and coffee. Prices soared to the point that people on fixed incomes could not afford necessities, and economists from both the political left and right agreed that a system of rationing and price controls must be devised.

This short experience with empty shelves and high prices made everyone an expert on the connection between supply and demand, and polls showed that the vast majority of Americans were willing to accept price controls and rationing. Ultimately, rationing was limited to three major areas of extreme importance and scarcity: (1) food fundamentals, including sugar, coffee, meat, most dairy products, and canned goods, (2) things made of fabric, as well as shoes and boots, and (3) tires, gasoline, and heating fuel. These areas also were price controlled, of course, but because they were considered essential, they also were rationed to reserve a fair share for everyone. Butter, for example, could not be bought without a ration coupon that proved one had not already purchased one's allotment.

The need can be seen in the simple case of shoes. The military required literally millions of pairs of combat boots and other footwear, and defense industries also needed millions of pairs of safety shoes, many newly sized for women. Because

factories prioritized those contracts, civilian shoe production slowed to a trickle. If women competed for the small supply of high heels, for example, wealthy women always could outbid working-class women, and a new pair of heels for the prom would become unobtainable for the average teen—and thus the need for rationing. Prentiss Brown, one of the three OPA chiefs during its existence 1942–1947 existence, reported that prior to rationing, some affluent people “bought a dozen pairs or more” of new shoes. He also quoted a New York executive who said that anything made of wool was snapped up in his stores; he added with both disgust and perplexity, “I don’t know what women think they are going to do with all the suits and coats they are buying.”

Such demand, of course, decreased supply and naturally led to higher prices and a ruinous lowering of the value of a dollar. More than any other presidency, the Roosevelt administration had long experience with economic planning; Congress agreed to the principle of cost controls; and the OPA was given authority to impose price ceilings that varied with supply. Many items could be purchased without ration documentation, but eventually 90 percent of goods for sale during the war were price controlled, which meant that stores could not charge more than the official OPA ceiling. The Office of War Information, which employed many female writers, joined with the OPA in a huge publicity campaign to educate the public about the need for price controls and what they should expect as they shopped for family needs. Much of this, of course, was aimed at women.

To its credit, the OPA also employed many women as price checkers: they went to stores, compared the posted prices with the official price ceiling, and issued citations if there were violations. They worked out of almost a hundred regional offices—and many more people volunteered on ra-



A woman with the Office of Price Administration goes over paperwork with a storekeeper. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*



tion boards, which also were under OPA's umbrella. Chester Bowles, who replaced Brown as OPA chief late in 1943, said there currently were 76,321 volunteer members of local rationing boards with more than 91,000 unpaid assistants. Most board members, not surprisingly, were men, while women did clerical work. If, for example, a person wanted to buy a precious new tire, he or she would request a certificate from the probably all-male ration board; a woman then likely would type the documentation that authorized the purchase.

A handful of women headed regional OPA offices, but female ability and knowledge of daily household economics was greatly underutilized at the policy-making level. Brown, Bowles, and their predecessor, Leon Henderson, endlessly told women how vital they were to making the system work, but few were appointed to top positions. Perhaps the most egregious example of underutilization is that of the board that advised the OPA on food rationing and health: in an era when medical schools did not teach nutrition, this board consisted entirely of male physicians. Not one home economist or dietician served, let alone any housewives or mothers or midwives. Not surprisingly, they failed to consider the additional food needs of women who were pregnant or lactating. That issue—of great concern to many soldiers expecting to become fathers—went unaddressed throughout the war.

The major area in which the OPA did not achieve its objectives was housing and rent control. That problem was so complex and incapable of solution that rent control enforcers often chose to ignore violations in crowded boom towns—the OPA's own Washington, DC being one of the worst situations. Such failures were unusual, though, as OPA economists can be commended for general objectivity, foresight, and fairness. They collected data on supplies and demand and then carefully thought through the implications of new policies before imposing them: in petroleum distribution, for example, they figured average temperatures in all parts of the country and rationed heating fuel accordingly. Tire rationing was similarly individualized, with variations depending on the need for driving to fulfill one's work obligations.

The OPA was a huge bureaucracy dealing with many changing variables and endless details that nonetheless were very important. Even average OPA employees and volunteers had great power over individual lives, but cases of abuse were few. Despite the great potential for bribes and corruption, there seldom were charges of such. Pete Martin and other investigative journalists highlighted black markets, which were especially bad in meat, but those involved were almost always were customers and retailers, not OPA employees or its volunteers. On the whole, OPA did a commendable job of preventing class divisions, as its workers made it clear that no one was exempt from the rules.

Some areas of rationing ended before the war ended, and the remainder ended soon after. Internationalists, clergymen, and others argued for postwar rationing both to feed Europe and to prevent inflation—a real concern for an economy with a relatively large amount of cash and little on which to spend it. Again, people were both responsible and generous,

showing some support for a return to rationing and a strong majority in favor of continued price ceilings. Polls in October 1945 and January 1946, well after the war was over, showed that almost three-fourths of Americans wanted to continue limitations on prices. As factories reconverted to civilian production, however, the economy functioned better than most had hoped. There was some inflation, of course, and some strikes as a result, but most Americans believed that the free market should flourish again in peace. Price ceilings on various goods dropped throughout 1946, and the OPA officially ended on May 29, 1947.

*See also:* **adolescence; advertising; conservation; dieticians; dress; food shortages; home economics; house-keeping; housing; inflation; Office of War Information; Pearl Harbor; postwar; pregnancy; rationing; strikes; underutilization; uniforms; volunteers**

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### OFFICE OF WAR INFORMATION (OWI)

Unlike enemy nations, the United States had no tradition of governmental control of information. In Imperial Japan, nothing was said that the palace did not authorize, and Hitler very effectively employed propagandists from the beginning of his rise. His Joseph Goebbels was the strongest national propagandist of all time, and after Nazi control was complete, he bragged about leading the German people like sheep. Both enemy nations banned books and movies from the West and both published depictions of Americans that were abhorrent, often with nearly pornographic images of women. Listening to an unauthorized radio broadcast was punishable by death. In contrast, America's free speech tradition meant that there was no agency for war information until well after the United States entered the conflict—and even then, it had no power beyond suggestion. The military censored, but no civilian agency had that authority. Meanwhile, Germans, Japanese,

and their allies continued to hear publicity about non-existent victories until just days before their surrender.

The White House did create a Coordinator of Information (COI) in 1941, but it lasted less than a year: this attempt to combine positive public relations at home with disinformation and espionage abroad proved impossible. President Franklin Roosevelt split its two functions into the Office of War Information (OWI) and the Office of Strategic Services (OSS), a spying agency that was the forerunner of the CIA. Former COI chief Colonel “Wild Bill” Donovan took over the OSS, while Elmer Davis, a respected CBS news reporter, headed the OWI. It officially began on June 13, 1942.

Working with other agencies, both private and public, the OWI was responsible for countless war-related public service messages. It used print—including newspapers, magazines, and posters—to convey information on war bonds, civil defense, conservation, rationing, recruitment, and more. Its photographers took pictures that publicized the endless variety of volunteer work for women, while OWI artists illustrated everything from the suffering of prisoners of war to the nation’s need for nurses to reminders that “loose lips sink ships” and the importance of writing letters to soldiers. The OWI also worked with creators in radio, movies, and even music to build morale and maintain war support. Radio then included a great deal of drama and comedy, as well as music and news, and the OWI supported playwrights and songwriters who included the war as a theme. Magazines, especially those aimed at women, also published fiction, but most OWI influence with magazines was on non-fiction. Those edited by women probably were the best way to disseminate useful information in a timely but detailed way, and the OWI had a hand in developing hundreds of ideas that became magazine articles.

OWI employees also spent much time in meetings with representatives of the mass communication industry, especially the War Advertising Council. Advertising agencies had a genuine problem during the war: because production was aimed at military needs, few civilian goods were available for purchase and presumably there was nothing to advertise. The solution was to take OWI suggestions for important public service messages and shape them to fit the needs of both businesses and the war. A shoe manufacturer, for example, might advertise that it was currently making millions of combat boots; it could offer advice on how to preserve rationed shoes and ask customers to remember the company’s name when the war ended.

The OWI’s Bureau of Motion Pictures produced hundreds of newsreels that were factual yet clearly pro-American, and many women went to the movies, in part, to see how the geography of the news affected their men overseas. The agency also created the still-extant Voice of America in 1942, and it became the nation’s radio representative abroad. The OWI worked on story ideas with book publishers, created the War Writers Board, and subsidized some books. Authors were less organized than other aspects of communications, and more than Madison Avenue advertisers or Hollywood producers,

the Writers Board was intended only for the duration: good writers were laudably wary of becoming propagandists. A few outstanding women, including anthropologist Ruth Benedict, were employed by the OWI to write major books, but they were hugely outnumbered by men.

The OWI, in fact, seriously underutilized talented and available female authors. Margaret Leech, for example, was the only woman on the War Writers Board. She won the Pulitzer Prize for her book about the nation’s capital during the Civil War, *Reveille in Washington* (1942), but the knowledge and influence of many other women would have been valuable—starting with Pearl Buck, who won the more prestigious Nobel Prize and had millions of avid readers worldwide. Her progressive views on race and especially her understanding of Asians would have positively affected postwar events. Refugees from fascism also would have added an important element to the board, and women such as writer Dorothy Thompson and publisher Blanche Knopf could have recommended such women.

While only a few women held top agency appointments, hundreds toiled as OWI employees. Many were young college graduates: newlywed Barbara Klaw, for example, worked for the OWI prior to joining her Army husband at a Missouri training camp. After living in the difficult and unwanted situation of a camp follower, she regretted many of the optimistic things she had written about how women could play a significant role in the war: it was clear that at Fort Leonard Wood, no one really wanted such efforts. Julia Child, too, worked briefly for the OWI prior to joining the OSS; she left the OWI because her work was dull. Famed environmentalist Rachel Carson did not work directly for the OWI, but as an employee of the U.S. Bureau of Fisheries, she spent the war writing pieces that encouraged women to serve less meat and more fish. Jane Jacobs, a visionary economist whose work remains undeservedly neglected, also wrote for the OWI as a young woman.

Whether or not they were young, though, many talented OWI women found themselves ignored by men who had their own preconceptions about what women want. This happened most often with movies, as Hollywood producers assumed that they understood women better than the OWI’s women and refused to take their advice. The best example may be *So Proudly We Hail* (1943), a movie that took the genuinely inspiring story of nurses trapped on Bataan and made an erroneous mush, falsely portraying glamorous women who were jealous of each other and dependent on men. According to film historians Koppes and Black, the “OWI’s women reviewers seized on the derogatory portrayal of women,” but the movie nonetheless was released. The OWI had no power beyond suggestion, and especially Hollywood men were disdainful.

Occasionally a truly creative idea was implemented outside of the Madison Avenue and Hollywood worlds. One of the more unusual things that the OWI arranged for radio was the Christmas 1943 broadcast of phone calls between a twelve-member family, all of whom were serving their nation

either at home or abroad. At the same season, a newspaper press release publicized the role reversal of a much smaller Portland family: mother Mary Jones was in the Women's Army Corps (WAC) and stationed at Conway, Arkansas. Her twenty-two-year-old daughter, Marilyn Jeanne Jones, had joined the Marines. Only the man of the family, Argyle Jones, was a civilian, but he was employed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

Pointing out such gender reversal was ahead of its time, as was the OWI's constant attempt to publicize the wartime contributions of African Americans and other minorities. More strikingly, it even tried to eliminate racist stereotypes of enemies and—without much success—reminded writers that the war was about ideology, not ethnicity. The OWI, for example, discouraged the use of “Huns” for Germans and other, much more degrading, terminology. Because of this, it became a target for conservative Southern Democrats, while anti-Roosevelt Republicans viewed its publicity as promotion of a liberal agenda. Its 1944 budget was severely cut, making it necessary to close branch offices, and on August 31, 1945, the president signed an executive order ending the OWI the following month, when the war also officially ended. Like other wartime agencies, its employees did not try to cling to the past: in its mere three-year existence, OWI workers had achieved their goals.

**See also: advertising; artists; Bataan; Benedict, Ruth; best sellers; bond sales; Buck, Pearl; camp followers; censorship; conservation; drama; Knopf, Blanche; intelligence, military; letter writing; magazines; Marines, Women; magazines; movies; music; posters; radio; recruitment; nurses; prisoners of war; spies; Thompson, Dorothy; underutilization; Women's Army Corps**

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### OPPOSITION TO THE WAR

In World War II, as in other wars, sincere pacifists with long-time objections to violence maintained their non-violence standards in both word and deed. When the nation imposed its first peacetime draft in 1940, Quaker women in the American Friends Service Committee and other religiously based pacifists assisted like-minded young men in using the law's exemption for conscience objectors. Secular pacifists did the same, working through organizations such as the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. These women opposed war in general, not this specific war, and many volunteered to comfort its victims, especially European refugees. They were internationalists, not isolationists, and viewed the world's diversity of people as entitled to equal justice.

That was not true of the many groups of extreme right-wing women who opposed World War II, especially prior to Pearl Harbor. They were led by ultra-conservative Republicans who were anti-Semitic, anti-British, anti-Russian, and especially anti-Roosevelt. Like men, women were associated with the prewar “America First” movement led by famed aviator Charles Lindbergh. In September 1939, when the war began in Europe, one of these women even used her plane to “bomb” restricted area near the White House and Capitol Hill with literature opposing American involvement. Confusingly named Laura Ingalls, she had no connection with the famous prairie author, but instead was an aviator friend of Lindbergh; she not only shared his isolationist views, but moved beyond to decided fascism. According to author Emily Yellin, Germany paid Ingalls about \$300 a month “to infiltrate isolationist groups spreading the pro-Nazi message in the U.S. America First and its unofficial women's auxiliary, “Women United.”

Nor did these women limit themselves to auxiliaries. In the days of official neutrality, between the 1939 outbreak of war in Europe and the U.S. entry late in 1941, numerous groups of women opposed American involvement in the war. Some members were merely anti-draft, but leaders were women whose views were far right: they were natural fascists would not have opposed a draft if the conscripted soldiers had been fighting for their ideology. For example,



the name of Catherine Curtis' group, Women's National Committee to Keep the U.S. Out of War, sounded innocuous enough—but Yellin described Curtis as a “woman whose hatred of Communism was rivaled only by her deep hatred of Jewish people.” Another group, “We the Mothers, Mobilize for America,” was led by Lyril Van Hying, who had departed so far from reality that she blamed Jews for the assassination of Abraham Lincoln. Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt and all of the “whole gang” at the White House, Van Hying said, were “the offspring of the old gang that threw stones at Jesus Christ ... and nailed him to the Cross because he ... upset their plans for world domination.”

Van Hying claimed 150,000 members in “We, the Mothers,” but her publication, *Women's Voice*, went to only 20,000. Glen Jeansonne, who studied the movement in great detail, wrote that as many as “five or six million” women may have been involved prior to Pearl Harbor and that they belonged to “some fifty to one hundred groups.” Most were in the Midwest, where the anti-Roosevelt *Chicago Tribune* gave them credibility. Jeansonne wrote that the *Tribune* claimed one group alone, “the Los Angeles-based National League of Mothers of America,” had “ten million members.”

These California women were encouraged by Hearst newspapers, a chain that also opposed Roosevelt and Democrats. The president of this group was Kathleen Norris, a best-selling author whose first book was *Mother* (1910). Much more moderate than other leaders, Norris was a genuine pacifist, and after what Jeansonne called an “unruly” convention in 1941, she resigned and the league split apart. There was, indeed, much in-fighting among the individualists who belonged to these groups, and none proved a long-term success as an organization.

The public not only came to disagree with their ideology, but even more, was offended by their tactics. For example, when the *Reuben James* became the first American ship sunk by Germany—on October 31, 1941, before the two nations officially were at war—a group called “Mothers of Sons” was so insensitive that, accordingly to writer Patricia Lochridge, they sent “with pride a letter .. to all the parents” of the 115 sailors who died, telling them that their sons' lives had been wasted. The letter even went on to urge these grieving families to sue “the President and the Secretary of the Navy ... as private citizens for the lives lost.” Other groups did the same, and some of their anti-Semitic letters ended up in the hands of Jewish mothers whose sons had been killed. Appalled by such tactics, Lochridge titled her critique “The Mother Racket,” and added that very few of the leaders actually were mothers, at least not of sons. Most had inherited wealth or were married to rich conservatives, who often subsidized their travel and publications. Some, according to Yellin, even referred to their members as “stupid,” in exact emulation of Hitler's propagandists.

Women's magazines steadfastly ignored these women when they were at their height, and when *Woman's Home Companion* published Lochridge's 1944 expose, it may well have been motivated by the ongoing trial of Lois de LaFayette

Washburn and Elizabeth Dilling. Like Van Hying, they were Chicago-based, but claimed a national audience. Washburn, who said that she was a descendent of Revolutionary War hero LaFayette, was an officer in the National Gentile League, and according to Jeansonne, vowed to carry on “as long as a single Jew remains alive on the North American continent.” Declaring “I am a Fascist,” she gave a Nazi salute to the court on the first day of the trial. Washburn, in fact, was so extremist that “even Dilling would have nothing to do with her.” Dilling, who was much better known, had begun writing rabidly right-wing books back in the 1930s, when she labeled the New Deal as “Jew Deal” and attacked esteemed Chicago community leader Jane Addams; she even condemned the League of Women Voters as communist inspired. Both openly admired Hitler and were sure that he would and should win the war.

The Justice Department debated for years about whether or not to charge such advocates for the enemy under the 1917 Sedition Act, and finally indicted twenty-two men, along with the two women. A federal trial began in Washington, D.C., on May 17, 1944, and prosecutors told the jury that they would prove that the defendants were co-operating with the Nazis in trying to overthrow the U.S. government. Defendants, though, took every advantage that democracy afforded them and threw the trial into mayhem. Yellin quoted the *New York Times*: “Rising like a nest of disturbed locusts at every attempt of the prosecution to introduce documentary evidence, the defense lawyers kept the court ruling constantly on objections, day after day, week after week.” In November, Judge Edward C. Eicher died of a heart attack, and with the war nearly over, the defendants went free on a mistrial.

Although these right-wingers were a tiny fraction of all women, at least one congresswoman was sympathetic to their views. Once again, Illinois provides an example of the era's range of ideology: Emily Taft Douglas of Chicago was an internationalist who supported the Allies, the new United Nations, and other democratization—and was a complete contrast to Jessie Sumner, a downstate Republican who was first elected in 1938. An unmarried attorney, she was an extreme critic of the Roosevelt administration and especially its foreign policy. Despite studying law at Oxford University, she was a fervent isolationist and remained so long after U.S. involvement in the war: she even tried to postpone the D-Day invasion to liberate Europe, declaring that it made no difference if Hitler or Stalin won. Despite attacking popular generals and voting against veterans' benefits, the rural district reelected Sumner until 1946, when she retired to assume the presidency of her father's Milford bank.

She was typical of right-wing women in that she was more partisan than patriotic, narrowly focused on personal interests and indifferent to the world. Ironically, in the post-war era, these women who had opposed World War II were strong supporters of the Cold War aimed at Russia and the Korean War that indirectly targeted China—both of whom had been vital allies. They abhorred the United Nations and other efforts of true opponents of war. Like the organizations

of women who opposed their own enfranchisement prior to the suffragists' 1920 victory, the wartime organizations of reactionary women ended with Allied victory.

*See also:* **British women; D-Day; Douglas, Emily Taft; draft; League of Women Voters; magazines; Pearl Harbor; postwar; Roosevelt, Eleanor; Russian women; United Nations; veterans; Russian women; Women's International League for Peace and Freedom**

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## **PACIFIC THEATER OF OPERATIONS (PTO)**

The war began and ended in the Pacific, even though it was Europe that drew most attention in the years just prior to American involvement. While the public focused on Hitler's quelling of every European nation except Britain, Japan was planning its December 7, 1941, attack on Hawaii's Pearl Harbor. That loss was devastating, as along with some twenty-four hundred fatalities, it wiped out large portions of the naval fleet. Because of the lack of ships, the United States was forced to focus on the ground war in North Africa, while women helped build new vessels for the Pacific fight.

Nor had Americans paid much attention to the fact that Japan had invaded Manchuria in 1931 and went on to brutally conquer China's coastal cities. Among the American women who became refugees during this series of attacks was another Mrs. Eleanor Roosevelt, a cousin of the first lady, who was bombed in the takeover of Shanghai, and Montana-born Rose Hum Lee who survived the 1937 invasion of Canton. Nanking women were so badly mistreated that its defeat is routinely referred to as "the Rape of Nanking." These cities were conquered four years before Japan went to war with the United States, and tens of thousands of civilian women who were citizens of Allied nations became refugees and prisoners of war in the Southwest Pacific.

Japan followed up the air attack on Pearl Harbor with invasion of the Philippine Islands at Christmas, 1941. During the next five months, the U.S. Army would continually lose ground, and General Douglas MacArthur surrendered in May. Some seventy-five thousand American and Filipino soldiers were forced into what became known as the Bataan Death March. Red Cross worker Margaret Utinsky wrote of that scene:

We came so soon after the surrender that the dead bodies were everywhere. Bodies lay all around ... I was sick with shock. I couldn't believe my eyes. Every foot of the way brought new horrors. I cannot blot out the awful picture of starved dogs tearing at those poor bodies, running off, growling, carrying a man's hand or a whole arm, tearing at his face.

Some members of both the Army Nurse Corps and the Navy Nurse Corps escaped to Australia, but others would become prisoners of war. Because nurses are obligated to treat even enemies, some met Japanese soldiers before the surrender. Juanita Redmond reported of a Japanese patient on Bataan who screamed at the women trying to care for him:

We asked him some questions through the interpreter, and he said all Japanese soldiers had been told by their officers that the Americans gave no quarter, took no prisoners, but would destroy them all, so it was better to die fighting.

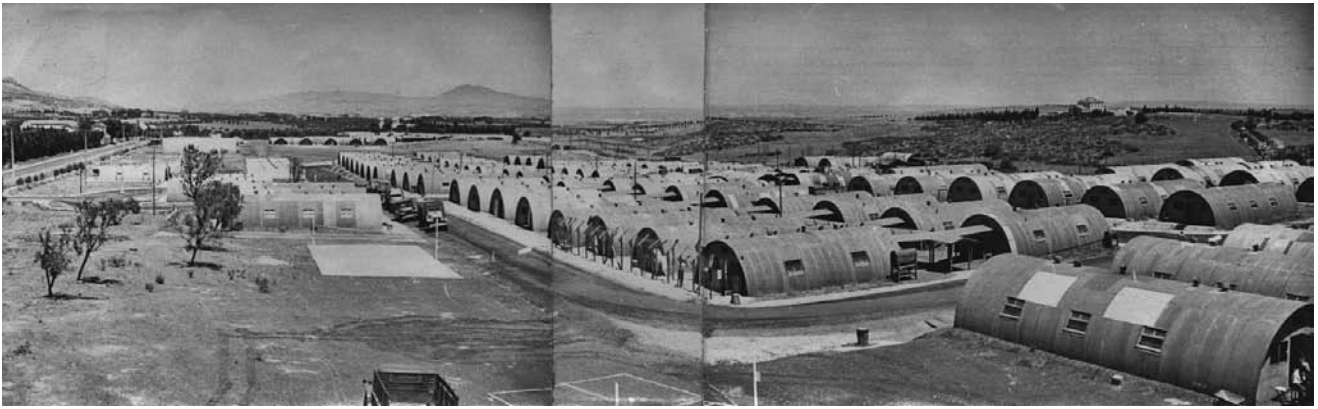
"Why are you fighting?" we asked.

He looked astonished. "Because we are told to," he said.

But when we asked whether Americans could expect from the Japanese the same kind of treatment we had given him, he refused to answer.

The Japanese people indeed were indoctrinated with false images of Westerners—nor did they show mercy to other Asians. Although the white women who became prisoners were not mistreated as they expected to be, the same was not true for Filipinas or other Pacific islanders. According to military historian Mark Johnston, after a Japanese retreat on New Guinea, an Australian soldier recorded in his diary that he "had come across ... native men + womens [sic] bodies hanging to trees. The woman [sic] had their breasts cut off." Another group of eyewitnesses later testified to "na-





These “Quonset huts” were typical housing in the Pacific Theater. Made of metal, they were designed to resist tropical rain. *Courtesy of the Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

tives tied to trees and bayoneted, apparently for practice ... a native woman spread-eagled on the ground, her hands and legs tethered, then being raped, mutilated and killed; another dead woman tied by her arms and legs to a verandah, with seventy or more condoms lying around her.”

Lucy Wilson Jopling was one the nurses evacuated prior to the surrender. With a dozen other women, she went by submarine to Australia in early May of 1942. She later returned as a flight nurse and was assigned to the islands of New Hebrides and Guadalcanal; after the war, she married a former prisoner of war. Escaping by submarine was unusual, and Juanita Redmond described leaving Corregidor for the long journey to Australia by plane. She wrote that many nurses never had been in an airplane, and this made a difficult introduction. They flew out, “fervently hoping that the Japanese were too befuddled by *sake* to notice the ships that skimmed the surface of the water like huge dragonflies.”

The plane’s crew, Redmond said, “were frankly nervous” about the reality of being shot down. Nurses were nervous but also “very cold. Most of us were anemic, and we shivered unhappily.” Fog forced them down the next morning on Mindanao, in the southern Philippines—unaware that the Japanese had landed there a few hours earlier. Of course, there were people desperate to get on the plane, and the women had to throw away their personal possessions to lighten it enough for take off. Even then it was a near thing, as the plane coughed and struggled before rising into the foggy air. When they finally arrived in Australia:

Darwin showed grim evidence of the heavy bombing on the 19th [of January, 1942]. We went through desolate streets to the hospital, which had been damaged, too ...

The city of Melbourne stared at us in astonishment. We had nothing but our forlorn-looking coveralls to wear and it was Australia’s winter season. We were thin as famine victims, hungry-eyed, and shivering. Restaurants, hotels, and the Port Melbourne Hospital staff were appalled at the quantities of food we wanted ...

Clothing presented a more difficult problem, for clothing was rationed and we had no cards. But we could get our hair shampooed and trimmed in shape again, and the

Port Melbourne nurses generously came to our rescue in the matter of wardrobes. Vitamins, liver extracts, tonics, and bed-for-several-days were prescribed ... Word of Corregidor’s surrender came on the second evening we were in Melbourne.

As the Japanese took over islands, they used a series of posters with English text to encourage desertion and distension among Filipino, Australian, and American soldiers. One showed a villainous American in bed with a beautiful, light-skinned woman and said: “Take your sweet time at the front, Aussie I got my hands full right now—with your sweet toots at home.” Others were equally crude. One depicted a woman with an Australia flag on her purse, who was kissing a man in an American uniform. Two men in the background, dressed in outback style, said: “Who Wouldn’t? The Yankees are handsome and they got money. You can’t blame her.” Leaflets that the Japanese dropped on New Guinea may have been the most tasteless. They showed an Australian soldier standing on a map of New Guinea, looking anxiously at a map of Australia, where an American soldier was carrying off a reluctant Australian woman—whose bottom was fully exposed.

As the naval fleet was rebuilt and victories won, the Red Cross sent women to support soldiers, and *Reader’s Digest* covered those in the PTO late in 1943. Red Cross women did a variety of work, but one of their chief goals was maintaining morale. Loss of youthful cheerfulness eventually became a problem for almost everyone in the PTO. Army Nurse Corps (ANC) member LaVonne Telshaw Camp wrote that she was grateful for “the Red Cross girls” and the occasional recreational activities they organized as a distraction from “the loneliness and discomfort that we faced every day.” A flight nurse, she never forgot her first introduction to the PTO.

Spattered with mud, soaked to the skin, dismayed by the sight of the little hole in the jungle that would be our habitation for as far as we could see into the future, we tried to be jolly ... We dared not reveal, even to each other, the scene that lay before our eyes had subdued our enthusiasm and increased our misgivings ... [There was] an inescapable odor

of mildew, as ... the chief nurse greeted us ... I thought there was a touch of pity in her voice ...

I knew little about the diseases I encountered and even less about the Asian soldiers who suffered from them. Nothing in my nursing education had taught me how to deal with rats, men who spit on the floor, soldiers who used firearms to chase gigantic cockroaches, or patients who sold rather than swallowed their medicine.

Although military nurses were expected to cope without any particular preparation for Asia, the War Department was reluctant to allow non-nursing women to go there, and the first of some five thousand members the Women's Army Corps (WAC) did not arrive in the PTO until May 1944. They were assigned to New Guinea; others would serve throughout the South Pacific area then known as "Hollandia." The jungle climate soon proved almost as much an enemy as the Japanese. Oppressive heat and humidity caused "jungle rot," a serious form of dermatitis, while mosquitoes brought malaria.

Worse, the Army Quartermaster Corps took these new military women so much less than seriously that, according to official historian Mattie Treadwell, it shipped "arctic clothing, including ski pants and ear muffs"—in September, the beginning of summer in the Southern Hemisphere. The result was that women had only one pair of suitable coveralls, and constant rain and humidity made proper laundering impossible. Treadwell concluded by saying that—as in other overseas theaters—American men were thrilled to have these women nearby, and the result of the clothing shortage was that "gifts of flowers and candy were scorned, and the successful applicant for a date was one who came carrying ... trousers."

Men, in fact, had been so happy to hear about the WAC arrival that they lined up for haircuts until midnight. Later, some even built a mosquito-proof dance hall where women could wear skirts instead of their usual pants—and added a covered walkway to the latrine to keep the women's shoes free of mud. A *Saturday Evening Post* reporter described the latrine as "the only authentic Poudre Room in 10,000 square miles." But despite such kindness and despite memos from Mary-Agnes Brown, who commanded the WAC in the PTO, similar uniform problems continued when WACs were assigned to the Philippine Island of Leyte. Women never got waterproof footwear for tropical monsoons, and Treadwell reported that WACs had just "one pair of field shoes, which never dried out but had to be cleaned up and put back on still wet."

When Lieutenant Colonel Brown considered withdrawing her troops, however, the women insisted on staying—despite regular bombing on Leyte. They worked as radio and telephone operators for the Signal Corps, and their male superiors praised them: "They kept communications open between alerts that sent them into foxholes," said one. Another added that Leyte WACs "worked long hours into the night in lantern-lighted tents ... We were interrupted frequently by air-raids, but they didn't panic."

Both because of the difficult climate and the inexcusable supply situation, the rate of illness among WACs was high-

est in the PTO—yet it still compared well with non-combat men. Army nurses, who had been working longer and harder for years, had the highest rate of hospitalization, while Red Cross women had the lowest. Some WAC officers believed they could have done more to prevent illness if they had been allowed more control over the billeting of enlisted women, but female officers repeatedly were overruled by male officers on that and other requests. The most frequent complaint was that, despite objections from Brown and others, women in the PTO—including nurses and Red Cross employees—were restricted to fenced-in compounds. They could not leave without armed male escort, and thus had few recreational opportunities.

With nothing but work and sleep in hot and humid tents, there was a definite risk of psychological problems. WAC Selene Weise had additional emotional difficulties because she did not hear from her soldier husband, but like most women, she tried to put on a cheerful face. She wrote her mother from "Netherlands, East Indies" in 1944:

Well, another Christmas come and gone. It was a very nice day in spite of the terrific heat. We came home Sunday evening to find that some of our tent mates had procured some red and green crepe paper and decorated the tent ... Even our two brooms were dressed up with an immense paper bow on each ... Someone started a Christmas carol and ... we tiptoed very quietly until we were just outside our CO's [commanding officer's] tent, then burst into song. She was so surprised. When we finished she gave us a can of boned turkey and a half-pint of Four Roses. She said, "It isn't much, but it's all I have." You have no idea how scarce those things are over here, so it was a great sacrifice ... [Your] box was the most delightful surprise ... I was so fortunate to receive two packages. Jean only got one and the other girls none at all.

The packages may have been sorted by other WACs, as one of the chief tasks of PTO WACs was handling mail. Weise was a cryptologist in the Signal Corps, and the nature of her military occupational speciality (MOS) was so secret that she could not talk about it. Her letters home may have been censored by other WACs, too, as that was another common MOS. Treadwell quoted the male officer who ran the censorship office at New Guinea's Port Moresby:

I don't know what there is about women that makes them so sharp-eyed in reading letters, but the ones I have here possess an uncanny knack for picking up hidden security breaches, such as tricky codes a soldier may devise to tell his wife where he is ... [WACs] are turning out more and better work than the male officers they released to the combat areas.

Many women enlisted in the WAC because it was the only non-nursing corps that went overseas. Ruth Coster was one such: a North Carolinian, she worked in a Lucky Strike cigarette factory until joining the Women's Army Corps (WAC) early in 1944. After training at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, and Fort McClellan, Alabama, she achieved her goal and served in New Guinea and then in the liberated Philippines. Her



This picture of women trying to escape from Singapore was taken shortly before the Japanese invaded that city. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

New Guinea post was rather remote, with limited supplies and recreational opportunities. "If we had beer," she said, "we drank beer; if we had Cokes, we drank Cokes." She was one of relatively few who did not smoke and regularly traded her monthly allotment of cigarettes for someone else's monthly allotment of beer. Her experience changed her from a provincial factory worker into a cosmopolitan woman, and she was disappointed when WACs were sent home from the PTO early in 1946.

The worst day for WACs there was May 13, 1945, when a plane went down in New Guinea, killing seven of the eight women and fourteen of the sixteen men aboard. Among those killed was Helen Greene Kent, whose pilot husband had been shot down over Europe two years earlier. Survivor Maggie Hastings, a corporal, was badly burned; she later wrote a dramatic story for *Reader's Digest* about her forty-seven-day ordeal. It had begun as a pleasure trip, a detour to view a fabled area:

We were going to get a look at Hidden Valley, a cliff-walled Shangri-La deep in the interior, entirely cut off from the outside world by towering mountains. Every pilot who had flown over it had come back with a tall tale. The natives were all giants. They were headhunters and cannibals. Their lands were cultivated, and crisscrossed with irrigation ditches. All the women were Dorothy Lamours in blackface ...

[Three days after the crash,] we suddenly realized that the natives were more afraid of us than we of them! Far from being seven feet tall, they averaged around five and a half feet. And certainly they didn't look very fierce. Their clothing consisted of a thong around their waists ... [with] snoods made of heavy string hanging from their heads down their backs. In these snoods they tucked anything they had to carry ... Some had smeared themselves with a smelly black grease ...

We tried to press our gifts on them. I thought of my compact, and they were wildly delighted with it, gurgling

and chattering like magpies when they saw their own faces ... [but] before they left us they returned the jackknife, the compact and the hard candy. Never would they accept presents ...

None of the women used ornaments. All they wore was a G-string woven of supple twigs. They were graceful, fleet creatures, and as shy as does ... They held out a pig, sweet potatoes and some little green bananas ... I visited the queen often after that ... One day I absented-mindedly ran a comb through my hair. She was enchanted. Half the village gathered round and I combed my hair until my arm was tired.

Every piece of equipment we had in camp fascinated the natives. Yet they wanted none of it. They would use a good GI axe or jungle knife when working for us. But they reverted to the stone axe the minute they had anything to do for themselves. They were too smart to permit a few chance visitors from Mars to change the rhythm of centuries.

We found no evidence in either valley that the natives had a religion. There were no idols, no altars ... The natives understood that we were going. Tears streamed down their faces. I knew I was losing some of the best and kindest friends I would ever have.

Navy women had much less chance for such an experience than Army women, as none of its three non-nursing corps was allowed to go overseas. The Navy Nurse Corps (NNC), however, had been doing so for decades, and some became prisoners of war in both the Philippines and on Guam; six were killed on the *USS Comfort*. The *USS Solace* was home to other NNC women, including Catherine Shaw; she served in its psychiatric unit, treating shell-shocked men who were completely traumatized by what they had seen. Alene Duerk, who later became the nation's first female admiral, arrived in the PTO as the war was winding down. She nursed on the *USS Benevolence*, a hospital ship "nearly as long as two football fields." Like all ships leaving American harbors, only





The Army's *Yank* welcomes WACs to the Pacific Theater. Note the newspaper's price in the upper right: "centavos" indicates potential Spanish-speaking purchasers, while "guilders" appeals to Dutch-speakers in what was then called Hollandia. *Courtesy of Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

a few officers onboard knew the destination, and when she departed from New York, she assumed that she was bound for Europe.

Instead the ship went through the Panama Canal and on to Hawaii "to become part of the Navy's massive Third Fleet heading for the waters off the coast of Japan. The Third Fleet was huge," she said: "six hundred ships traveled in a large circle as they moved quietly and cautiously together through the Pacific Ocean." In contrast to military ships that were painted gray and blacked out at night, hospital ships were "painted white and could easily be seen. Large red crosses were painted on its huge smokestack and on its side. At night, all the lights onboard the unarmed hospital ship were turned on."

It made them an easy target, but by 1945, the Japanese no longer pursued their early-war tactics, when they bombed even clearly-marked hospitals: Army nurses on Bataan and Corregidor suffered much more than the seemingly easily-targeted ships on which the NNC served. The *Benevolence* went from Hawaii to Guam and then to Eniwetok, in the Marshall Islands, and on to its final destination of Japan—even though the war was not yet over. Duerk noted that, unlike the

land-based Army nurses, NNC members wore their white, skirted uniforms because they "wanted their sick and injured patients to forget about the dirt, grime, pain, and horrors of war." Other NNC members pioneered on the island of Tinian, from which the *Enola Gay* flew: named for the pilot's mother, the plane dropped the first atomic bomb on August 6, 1945. The cultural shock of postwar Asia can be seen in that, according to historian Vicki Friedl, the Navy nurses on Tinian were "the first white women ever seen on the island."

Duerk and other military nurses would serve in occupied Japan, but WACs did not. General MacArthur, Japan's supreme commander, never had been as enthusiastic about the WAC as his colleagues in the European Theater of Operations: Treadwell said that after greeting the first WAC officers to arrive, he never responded to any communications. Added to the lack of support from the War Department, especially the Army Quartermaster Corps, the result was that an appalling 82 percent of Air Wacs in MacArthur's command said that they wanted to go home as soon as possible—compared with just 5 percent in Italy.

By September of 1946, a year after the war's official end, just seventy-five WACs remained in the Pacific—but then, as happened elsewhere, male officers found that they missed their efficient female workers. At the same time that WAC numbers throughout the world were plummeting, those in the Pacific began to grow. The Navy's WAVES, too, finally were permitted to go to Hawaii late in the war, and female presence in the Pacific again would rise in the postwar period.

In May 1945, Selene Weise—whose name was Treacy during the war—wrote a poem:

#### "Justification"

I am a WAC,  
One of thousands.  
We like the sound of the Four Freedoms,  
But we heard the incessant chatter of Machine guns,  
And the ominous sound of strange names.  
Guadalcanal, Bougainville,  
Coral Sea, and the Solomon Islands ...

Yes, we like high heels, soft lights and a Scotch and Soda  
But the pulsing rhythms of the Conga became the sounds  
of distant cannons.  
The muffled sound of footsteps on the carpet  
Were the faint soft sounds of a Jap shifting his position,  
And the tap of our shoes, the click of shells ...

So to those who question,  
You had a good job  
Why did you join?  
The tropics is no place women,  
Didn't you know?  
Sure we knew, that and a whole lot more.  
But I have seen the white crosses at Buna.

**See also:** Air WAC; Army Nurse Corps; Bataan; Brown, Agnes-Mary; censorship; cigarettes; Corregidor; cryptography; European Theater of Operations; fatalities; food shortages; Hogan, Rosemary; Kent, Helen Greene; letter writing; military occupational speciality; occupied Japan; Navy Nurse Corps; North Africa; Pearl Harbor; posters; postwar; prisoners of war; Red Cross; Quartermaster Corps; rationing; recreation; refugees; Signal Corps; shipbuilding; travel; uniforms; V-J Day; WAVES; Women's Army Corps

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## PAY

That men are paid more than women, even for the same work, has been and remains an indisputable fact. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, women earn about three-quarters of the amount that men do. In the nineteenth century, the ratio was closer to half, while in the middle of the twentieth century, when World War II occurred, it was about two-thirds. Women are making progress, but it is slow—especially given that Congress passed the Equal Pay

Act in 1963. That act, passed under President John F. Kennedy, was a milestone Congress had rejected two decades earlier during the war.

It was an extremely rare woman who questioned the era's unequal pay. The young women who worked in defense industries grew up during the Great Depression and had been taught to think of men as the natural household breadwinners. Because a man was expected to support his wife and children, the almost unanimous public view was that he should be paid more because he needed more. Widows, unmarried women, and those married to men incapable of work simply did not factor into the common mind-set. Nor did that change much during the war, despite national appeals for millions of women to enter the labor force. They usually were based on patriotism, not pay, and certainly not equal pay.

A 1943 report by the Women's Bureau of the Labor Department summarized tiredly: "Time and again the maximum rate paid to women on comparable operations was lower than the minimum rate paid to men working on the same machine or part." Another departmental investigation found that just three of eighteen munitions plants paid women and men equally. Those three probably were unionized companies—but most unions that insisted on equal-pay clauses in contracts did so to keep the company from undercutting male wages by hiring women, not out of concern for female justice. The Roosevelt administration and Labor Department leaders, including Mary Anderson and Frances Perkins, advocated equal pay, but especially Perkins turned a blind eye to employers who evaded the principle by segregating women and assigning them "women's jobs"—even though jobs differed only slightly from those of men and had been done by men before the war.

Nor was it just governmental agencies that recognized the disparity. *Business Week* acknowledged in 1942 that "only a third of companies [with federal contracts] adhered to the [administration's] policy of equal pay for equal work." Economist Colston E. Warne reported that "in gun manufacture, on each of five types of machines on which experienced women and men worked, the *lowest* rate for men always was at least 10 cents *above* the women's highest. Beginning rates in such plants ranged from 60 to 74.5 cents for men and from 43.4 cents to 45 cents for women." *New York Times* writer Elizabeth Hawes fumed that the War Labor Board ignored ostensible White House policy by "ruling that, no matter how efficient women may be, it is right for them to be paid less for the same work if the men are doing their work in another shop."

As with the draft and other issues, the public showed greater support for gender equality than might be expected. Asked in a February 1942 Gallup poll if "women replace men in industry, should they be paid the same wages as men," 78 percent said yes. Women were highly supportive of other women, with only 7 percent responding negatively. Despite such seeming support, however, no congresswomen took up the cause. They did so for military women and for the Bolton Bill that subsidized nurses, but equal pay was too far

ahead of its time. All national labor union presidents were men, and most were far from feminist. Nor did women's organizations push such legislation, and equal pay remained a policy applicable to businesses with federal contracts, not an enforceable law.

Not until the war was over, at the very end of 1945, did Mary T. Norton, who chaired the House Labor Committee, file such a bill; she was joined in the Senate by Florida's Claude Pepper. Their bills, said *Business Week*, intended to "make it an unfair labor practice for an employer to discriminate against women by paying them lower wages or by laying them off in favor of men." Despite qualifying language that included exemptions for "sound reasons," as well allowances for veterans' preference and seniority systems, the bills went nowhere. The need for female labor was past, and the Truman administration had other problems with labor, including postwar strikes.

Nonetheless, the war dramatically raised women's pay. New industries typically offer the best wages, and aircraft manufacture was the bright new star. Women in it earned an average of 60 to 90 cents an hour, compared with a prewar average around 45 cents an hour. The wartime work week was at least forty-eight hours, and with overtime, this seemed a fortune. Women who had few home obligations sometimes worked as much as seventy hours a week, and if she gave up her Sunday, she could earn \$14—more than a third of an expected weekly wage in just one day. Such money was a big motivation to skip church; its appeal could change a woman's life in many ways. A young woman who dropped out of college for aircraft work told writer Elizabeth Meyer, "I used to earn \$15 a month ... baking biscuits." Now she could earn nearly that much in a day.

Although their male co-workers generally were more hostile, women in shipbuilding were similarly thrilled with their paychecks. Wages in this industry varied more by geography than did wages in aircraft manufacture, for example, with the highest at the West Coast shipyards owned by Henry J. Kaiser, and the lowest on the Gulf Coast; shipyards in old cities such as Baltimore and Boston were in the middle. The average wage for a six-day week was between \$45 and \$60; "burners" at the top level of welding skill could make as much as \$1.20 an hour. Writer Beatrice Oppenheim found that women in shipyards were happy with their pay, even though the work could be dangerous and unpleasant.

The munitions industry discovered women's worth in World War I, and it had a better history of hiring African-American women than most defense industries. The unsurprising correlation was that munitions was both the most hazardous and the lowest-paid of defense industries. Wages averaged 45 to 60 cents an hour, or less than \$30 a week. Still, that was several times what black women made in domestic service, and they left that occupation in droves. Hispanic women and other farm workers also left their jobs for higher pay elsewhere, and the mostly white women who replaced them in the Women's Land Army were expected to see themselves as volunteers. They earned between \$14 and



\$18 a week—and paid about \$10 of that for room and board. Even those recruiting them, as did *Independent Woman*, acknowledged that after paying travel expenses, they could expect at best “something leftover for pin money.”

African-American women who joined the military earned equal pay with white women—but although racial pay discrimination was no longer acceptable in the military, that was not true for gender. Especially when measured by educational credentials, women were paid less than men. The initial base pay of the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps, for example, was a mere \$21 a month—about half as much as a childless wife of a serviceman got as his monthly allotment. The civilian women who flocked to Washington as “government girls” almost invariably were assigned work as typists or file clerks, even if they had college degrees that would have given a man a higher job description and pay status. Within the historic military nurse corps, women were paid less than they merited for their rank. The category of “relative rank” was invented to explain, for example, that a captain in the Army Nurse Corps was paid as if she were at the next lower rank, earning the same as a male first lieutenant.

That improved because of the wartime nursing shortage, but, when the war ended, most women who wanted to continue in the labor force found that they could not get jobs that paid nearly as well as those they had in defense industries. Even if a woman was qualified to be a teacher or nurse or telephone operator—the stereotypical professions open to them—those jobs continued to pay less than their value. If she had no education and wartime work was her first employment, she could expect to hear the Labor Department’s 1944 words about assisting laid-off aircraft workers in Los Angeles: it was “difficult for women to find employment ... at wages comparable to those which they had formerly earned.”

It was the beginning of a postwar phenomenon: the woman who literally could not afford to work, who—with child care, clothing and transportation costs—would take an actual financial loss if she were employed. The government could have saved itself billions of dollars in welfare costs if it had seriously committed itself to rising women’s wages at this important transitional time.

**See also:** African-American women; aircraft workers; allotments; Anderson, Mary; Army Nurse Corps; child care; defense industries; domestic workers; draft; employers/employment changes; “government girls;” Hispanic women; labor force; nurses; Perkins, Frances; munitions; postwar; rank; recruitment; shipbuilding; strikes; teachers; telephone operators; travel; unions; volunteers; wives of servicemen; Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps; Women’s Land Army

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## PEARL HARBOR

Cornelia Fort may have been the first American to see Japanese planes approaching the Hawaiian island of Oahu, where they would drop bombs that killed some twenty-four hundred sleeping sailors early on Sunday morning, December 7, 1941. A talented aviator, Fort had taken a male student up for flying lessons and was in the sky when planes with Japan’s Rising Sun appeared just next to her. Although she escaped safely that day, Cornelia Fort would die later in the war.

Other women, too, were shocked at how low the planes flew. Historian Diane Fessler did a laudable job of interviewing military nurses, and several told her of the attack’s closeness. Lenore Terrell Rickett, a member of the Navy Nurse Corps (NNC), was on duty at the naval hospital, and said, “I saw the planes up above, and I could see the bombs coming out six in a row.” Army Nurse Corps (ANC) member Sara Entrikin was at Hickam Field; she remembered: “I ran outside and saw the red sun on a plane that was coming in so close that I could see the faces of the pilots. One of them looked at us and smiled.” A third, the ANC’s Mildred Clark Woodman, declared, “they flew so close I could hear the radio communications between the pilots.” Stationed at Schofield Barracks, she added, “the hospital was hit, even though the building had a large Red Cross painted on the roof.”

Chaos ensued on the ships, and as thousands of men were dying, there was no retaliatory anti-aircraft fire. Nor had there been any declaration of war. Japanese emissaries still were in Washington, D.C., and, in fact, both Japan and German officially declared war on the United States prior to Congress’ declaration. If anything positive can be said

## PEARL HARBOR

about the sneak attack, it was that the pilots flew so low their bombs fell with deadly accuracy on military targets in the vast harbor, and only five civilians were killed. That was not the case elsewhere in the Pacific Theater of Operations, however, as especially in coastal China and the Philippines, Japanese soldiers killed women as savagely as men; in rape cases, more so.

Later there would be a great deal of political controversy about so many ships docked in one place and about whether military intelligence should have known about Japanese plans. None of this applied to women, though, nor did any respond with hysteria or chaotic behavior. They acted quickly and thoughtfully, as indicated by the sister of ANC member Sara Entrikin; Helen Entrikin was in the NNC and said:

When the planes dropped their bombs, then strafed as they came back, I ran inside the hospital and gathered up the narcotics and everything we would need. A little dressing room became a mini-operating theater, because the regular operating rooms became so backlogged. The patients were scared, and when they died we received others right away in their place. We put mattresses on the hallway floor.

Navy nurse Rickert added:

The hospital really surprised me, everything went so smoothly. Up until that time, if you sent your weekly supply request on a Friday, you were lucky if you received fifty per cent of it the next week. On that day, you scribbled what you needed on a piece of paper and someone ran over to the supply room and brought it right back. It was unbelievable, the way the whole hospital was that day. The corpsmen were spectacular.

NNC member Velera Vaubel Wiskerson needed a blanket for a man in shock, but her errand was interrupted:

A doctor called me over to help lift a patient in the burn ward ... I was holding under the patient's thigh and lower leg to raise him when his leg separated from the knee in my hands. I turned white as the sheet ... and took deep breaths to keep from fainting ... I found a blanket and took it downstairs. The patient who had needed the blanket had died, and a new one was in his place.

Nurses were so overworked that two of them, vital anesthesiologists, caught what little sleep they could between surgeries and did not leave the hospital for two weeks. To the extent that they had time to talk, they discussed their individual plans for the possibility of captivity. "Two," Woodman told Fessler, "indicated that they would walk into the sea, others would hide in caves, some would go with their friends to prison, while others of us would fight to the death and never be captured alive." As it turned out, though, Hawaii's women did not face this hard choice. Japan moved on to the Philippines instead, where nurses in Bataan and Corregidor did face that reality.

On this "date which will live in infamy," as President Franklin Roosevelt famously declared, 1st Lieutenant Annie G. Fox became the first of many ANC women who earned the Purple Heart. The citation that came with the decoration, according to military historian Judith Bellafaire, credited

Fox's "fine example of calmness, courage, and leadership." Nurses continued to provide those characteristics throughout the globe during the next years, and ultimately, the War Department saw that some women under fire were more capable of "calmness, courage, and leadership" than some men. The second class status of "relative rank" that had been assigned to the nursing corps since the early twentieth century finally changed, partly as a result of their example at Pearl Harbor.

The harbor and Honolulu remained a haven for the rest of the war. Some members of the Women's Army Corps (WAC) rested there as they moved in and out of other Pacific islands, and finally the Navy considered the area safe enough to send its non-nursing female corps, the WAVES, to Hawaii. Lieutenant Commander Joy Bright Hancock prepared for their arrival late in 1944, and Women Marines arrived early in 1945. Both worked at air traffic control towers, in motor pools, and other tasks. The USO built one of its few facilities for women in Honolulu, and it went back to being a pleasant military assignment. Almost every American, though, would remember where she or he was when they first heard of the attack. "Pearl Harbor" entered the language to mean both the place and the time, the infamous morning of December 7, 1941.

**See also: Army Nurse Corps; Bataan; Corregidor; decorations; European Theater of Operations; fatalities; Fort Cornelia; Hancock, Joy Bright; Hawaiian women; intelligence, military; Marines, Women; Navy Nurse Corps; North Africa; Pacific Theater of Operations; rank; USO; WAVES**

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## PERKINS, FRANCES (1880–1965)

The first woman to serve as a United States Cabinet member, Frances Perkins will remain one of its most significant members for all time. Revolutionary changes occurred when she headed the Department of Labor, including such economic fundamentals as Social Security.

A Bostonian by birth, she graduated from Mount Holyoke College in 1902; it was while teaching high school science in suburban Chicago that she began volunteering at Jane Addams' Hull House. Increasingly interested in economics, she returned East and earned a master's degree in sociology and economics from Columbia University in 1910. She also supported women's right to vote and marched in New York's significant parades.

Perkins began working in her new field with the Consumers' League, then a very active organization that pursued goals for workers as intently as for consumers. She especially championed maximum-hours laws to protect workers from dangerously long days. Perkins personally witnessed New York's horrifying Triangle fire of 1911, when 146 workers, mostly young women, died because they were locked into their workplace. In the fire's aftermath, she became a salaried employee of the mostly-male committee that investigated industrial safety.

All of this background came to fruition in 1918, when Al

Smith was elected governor. He appointed her to the New York State Industrial Commission, a post that made Perkins the nation's highest-paid female state employee. Developing contacts in both business and labor, she negotiated contracts, settled strikes, and succeeded in lowering the state's standard work week from fifty-six to forty-eight hours. She rose to the commission's chairmanship in 1926, and when Franklin Roosevelt was elected governor in 1928, he retained her. The stock market crashed the next year, and her work load increased as unemployment soared. Perkins tirelessly sought solutions, even going to Britain to learn the mechanics of its unemployment compensation. American workers had no similar insurance for layoffs until Perkins implemented it, first in New York and later at the federal level.

She solidified her friendships with Eleanor Roosevelt, Molly Dewson, and other Democrats who would form the background of the New Deal when Franklin Roosevelt was elected president in 1932. The Women's Division of the Democratic Party, which Dewson headed, played a significant role in his election, and Democratic women pushed for Perkins to be the nation's secretary of labor. It would have been easy for FDR to reject them: although her qualifications were as legitimate as those of a man, organized labor never fully welcomed women, especially in top positions. It is to Roosevelt's credit that he went ahead with the nomination, even in the face of opposition from men in the Congress of Industrial Organizations, which later merged with the American Federation of Labor to become the AFL-CIO. Despite Perkins' accomplishments in heavily unionized New York, no labor leaders championed her appointment and some disparaged it.

Roosevelt had faith in her, though, and emphasized her importance by seeing that she was sworn into office on the same day that he was. Perkins went to work immediately on the broken economy. In 1933, she successfully pushed passage of the National Recovery Act and created the still extant National Labor Relations Board (NLRB), which settles



Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins stands behind President Franklin Roosevelt as he signs the bill that created Social Security. More than any other Cabinet member, Perkins fundamentally changed the nature of the American economy with the implementation of unemployment insurance, maximum-hour and minimum-wage laws, as well as other worker protections. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*



conflicts between labor and business. In 1934, she led the nation into the International Labor Organization, which is still extant under the United Nations, and in 1935, Perkins led the implementation of Social Security. With the 1937 passage of the Fair Labor Standards Act that banned child labor, established minimum wages/maximum hours, overtime pay, and more, she achieved more than most government officials do in a lifetime.

World War II brought a different set of problems—as well as people who candidly said that although it was acceptable to have a woman as secretary of labor during the 1930s, it was not wise in the 1940s. Both she and Roosevelt, according to biographer George Martin, received “letters protesting her continued appointment” during war. They were signed by women as frequently as by men, and one even offered to help Perkins find another job: “I am far from rich,” said a woman in Columbus, Ohio, “but I do have something, and I’d be glad to contribute what I could until you were able to find something else.” Roosevelt, however, understood that if a woman could handle the profound economic problems of the Great Depression, she could deal with those of World War II.

The War Manpower Commission and other temporary agencies, in fact, eased her workload, but Perkins nonetheless played a key role in recruiting a labor force large enough to staff vital defense industries. She worked with unions for understanding of why strikes had to be banned during the war, and she helped implement policies that prevented the ruinous inflation usually associated with war. Like others in the administration, she opposed the Austin-Wadsworth Bill and similar proposals to draft women for industrial labor, and like Eleanor Roosevelt and other women of the era, she opposed the Equal Rights Amendment because it would nullify laws that protected working women.

In all of this, Perkins dealt almost exclusively with men who held the powerful positions in both business and labor. The press, too, was almost exclusively male then, and many of those journalists considered her too leftist. As a result, she did not do as much as needed to be done for women and minorities, but she did do as much as she felt that she could in the context of the times. Modern feminists have criticized her, but few women at the time were critical. Even fewer noticed when the head of the department’s Women’s Bureau, Mary Anderson, quietly resigned in 1944.

Perkins herself resigned the next year, a few months after President Roosevelt’s death. The end of the war would mean still another set of economic problems, and after twelve years on the Cabinet, she merited rest: indeed, she and Interior Secretary Harold Ickes (who, as a Jew, also was considered a minority) were the only Cabinet members to stay throughout Roosevelt’s administration. She published a well-received book, *The Roosevelt I Knew* (1947), and President Harry Truman offered Perkins a less stressful position with the Civil Service Commission. She held that appointment until Democrats lost the 1952 election.

Perkins needed her salary, as she supported her family for most of her life. She had retained her maiden name when she

married economist Paul Wilson in 1913, and for the first five years of their marriage, restricted herself to volunteer work and motherhood. One of their two children died, however, and her husband increasingly displayed the characteristics of a manic depressive. He gambled away their savings on the gold market during the Roaring Twenties, and while she held offices with governors Smith and Roosevelt, he only worked sporadically. After 1930, he would be in and out of mental hospitals, while she paid the expensive bills. Because he refused to move to Washington, she faithfully took the train to New York every weekend. With all of this, she had little time or energy for motherhood, and until late in life, her relationship with her daughter was less than satisfactory.

She never spoke of these things in Washington, however, and much like Oveta Culp Hobby of the Women’s Army Corps, no one knew how close Perkins was to total exhaustion. A very modest person, she did not receive the honors that she merited in terms of the significance of policies that she envisioned and implemented. President John F. Kennedy did honor Perkins at a 1963 dinner—but it also celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of the Labor Department. That recognition was in the same year as his assassination, and just two years prior to Frances Perkins’ death at ninety-five.

*See also:* **Anderson, Mary; Austin-Wadsworth Bill; defense industries; Dewson, Molly; employment; Equal Rights Amendment; Hobby, Oveta Culp; inflation; labor force; pay; strikes; Roosevelt, Eleanor; recruitment; unions; War Manpower Commission; Women’s Army Corps**

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### PHYSICIANS

Perhaps the worst of the war’s many cases of underutilization of women’s abilities was the War Department’s failure to use female physicians. Although Dr. Mary Walker and others volunteered in the Civil War, the Army Medical Corps later refused to accept women. The all-female Army Nurse Corps began in 1901 and the Navy Nurse Corps in 1908, and a few female physicians were hired on temporary contracts during World War I, but not until 1943 would a female physician be commissioned into the military.

Even then, Congress had to force the change. It occurred because of debate on the Bolton Act, which addressed the tremendous need for nurses, and especially because of lobbying led by Dr. Emily Barringer of Philadelphia's historic Woman's Medical College of Pennsylvania. The *Saturday Evening Post* mentioned Barringer when it editorialized in February of 1943:

Women ... work every day in our war industries ... Women are recruited for civilian activity from nurses aide to bus driver. But if by chance an American woman has had medical training..., she must, if she wants to help soldiers in the field, go to England, China or Russia ...

There are about 8000 women doctors in the United States, of whom a considerable number are certainly qualified for commissions in the medical branches of the Army or Navy. Several have already enlisted in the British army, which has no prejudice against competent surgeons on account of sex. There is, for example, Dr. Barbara Stimson, a niece of the Secretary of War, who went to England in 1940 to treat victims of air bombardment ... Similar is the career of Dr. Achsa Bean..., [who] is a major in the medical corps of the British army, and reported that "woman doctors work side by side with the men and have the same standing as any of the male contingent."

Technically, no legal action was necessary for female physicians, as the Army Medical Corps had the authority to accept them if it chose. Dr. Barringer led others in lobbying Congress to make that clear, and Alabama Representative John Sparkman introduced the appropriate legislation. Titled "an act to provide for the commissioning of female physicians and surgeons in the Medical Corps of the Army and the Navy," House Resolution 1857 passed both houses with little discussion. Most agreed with Democratic Representative Emanuel Celler of New York, who had filed a similar bill, when he said that "denial of [officer] commissions to women doctors is due to mere tradition and old ideas."

Nor would these female physicians be asked to accept the inferior "relative rank" given to nurses. The Labor Department's report on Sparkman Act said: "those commissioned... shall receive the same pay ... and be entitled to the same rights, privileges and benefits" as male military physicians. It applied to both the Army and the Navy, and President Franklin Roosevelt signed the act on April 16, 1943—approximately midway through the war.

The elitist Marine Corps, oddly enough, had commissioned a female physician a month earlier. The *New York Times* reported this as a progressive step, but failed to notice that she was not even an officer; she had been commissioned at the lowly rank of sergeant. Major media kept up the pressure for full use of women's abilities, though, and just after the Sparkman Act, *Time* said, "3000 of the 8000 U.S. women doctors could probably qualify for service." It worried, though that "neither the Army nor the Navy shows any sign of using many." Indeed, the article went on to report that Dr. Alice McNeal, a Chicago anesthetist, had reported for training at Camp Robinson in Arkansas—but when the 13th Hospital

Unit moved out, "forty Chicago doctors went, but Dr. McNeal was left behind."

Women's magazines also publicized the cause, and the Business and Professional Women's Clubs, which published *Independent Woman*, updated its readers on passage of the Sparkman bill. *Woman's Home Companion* was especially vehement: "Any woman who can get to be a practicing physician or surgeon in this country at all," it editorialized, "is something of a superwoman." Pouncing on the War Department's illogic in worrying that women were too emotional or that male patients would be embarrassed by women doctors, it pointed out that nurses dealt with the same patients. "Our chief allies," it continued, "suffer from no such self-imposed handicaps." *Time* echoed that point, citing the 85 percent female enrollment in Russian medical schools.

Ultimately, fewer than one hundred female physicians chose to battle the War's Department's barriers, but those who did enlist had been so thoroughly sifted through screens of prejudice that they were superlative doctors. According to Army historian Mattie Treadwell, the Army's Surgeon General, who had failed to encourage female physicians, changed his mind by the war's end and testified that "they built up an enviable record of exceptionally high professional standards ... In the face of considerable prejudice, women have demonstrated their skill."

U.S. medical schools, however, remained conservative. Harvard finally opened its medical school to women in the last year of the war—almost a century after Boston physician Harriot K. Hunt offered a large donation if female students were admitted. Other signs of enlightenment were hard to detect: although medical school enrollment plummeted as young men went to war, most continued to adhere to a 5 percent quota of female students, and most hospitals refused to accept female physicians as residents for postgraduate training. *Newsweek* declared that discrimination reached an "all-time high" when the Army and the Navy began contracting with medical schools for a percentage of entering classes and "filling them soldiers and sailors whose education won't cost them a cent."

Men in the Army Medical Corps, in fact, were so dedicated to a world of all-female nurses and all-male doctors that, at the war's end, they briefly succeeded in getting Congress to pass technical legislation to create a Women's Medical Specialist Corps, presumably so that female physicians could be segregated into it. Treadwell wrote that this proposed corps would be in addition to the historic Army Nurse Corps and the new Women's Army Corps; it was to be "composed of female officers commissioned as dietitians, physiotherapists, and other medical specialists." Like the older corps, it would be headed by a woman whose rank could rise no higher than colonel. Fortunately, the 1945 Women's Armed Services Integration Act put an end to such ghettos for credentialed women.

The war did disappointingly little to improve the status of female physicians, which had been better prior to the development of medical schools in the second half of the

## PHYSICIANS

nineteenth century. Not until after the feminist revolution of the 1970s would female physicians be as well positioned as they had been back in the 1870s.

*See also:* **Barringer, Emily; Bolton Bill; Business and Professional Women's Clubs; colleges; Craighill, Margaret; magazines; nurses/nursing; rank; Russian women; underutilization; Women's Armed Services Integration Act**

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## POSTERS

In a time before television, posters were used by the Office of War Information and countless other entities to convey important war messages. Thousands of wartime posters that now are preserved by the Library of Congress addressed dozens of issues. Among many that addressed conservation of scarce goods, for example, was this new information: "The Silk in 185 Pairs of Stockings Will Make 1 Army Parachute—Take Better Care of What You Buy." Just as silk and newly-invented nylon were needed for parachutes and other aviation/naval purposes, metal was needed for everything from ship hulls to bullets. A poster issued by the War Production Board showed prostrated soldiers with a line of empty food cans that morphed into their machine guns:

Save Your Cans —

Help Pass the Ammunition

Prepare Your Tin Cans For War

1. Remove Tops and Bottoms
2. Take Off Paper Labels
3. Wash Thoroughly
4. Flatten Firmly

Another showed a swastika-labeled plane spiraling from the skies, and said: "YOUR SCRAP brought it down. KEEP SCRAPPING. Iron and steel—rubber—all other metals—rags. MOVE ALL SCRAP NOW! Every neighborhood had a depository where such cans were picked up in salvage drives, and local grocers bought fats to be used for explosives. A detailed poster explained that: the process was illustrated with five photographs that began with a housewife draining her frying pan and ended with an explosion on a tropical island. The chief headline read: "Fats Help Make Gunpowder—a tablespoon each day from your kitchen will crush the Axis." A subheading, "Where Fat Goes," explained that "one pound of waste fats equals 1/10 of a pound of glycerine," a key component of explosives. A second subheading graphically stated "Dead Animal Fats Are Useful," adding that "your government needs ... dead farm animals."

Food conservation also was very important to a nation that not only was feeding a ten-million man military, but also attempting to feed millions of war-devastated civilians abroad. "Can All You Can," for example, featured a jar of home-canned fruit, with other garden produce in the background. Another on this theme, issued late in the war, used simple language to explain that some vegetables offered more nutrition than others: depicting an American soldier holding a hungry child, it said, "Plant MORE BEANS. Help Feed Those Freed From Axis Rule."

Nutrition was a relatively new field, and many posters on food went into appreciable detail—perhaps using the assumption that women standing in ration lines would have time to read and learn. One such was headlined, "Americans! Share the meat as a wartime necessity." It went on to explain the "men, women, and children over 12" were entitled under rationing to "2 pounds of meat per week, excluding poultry, fish, and organ meat." Other fine print offered more information, and finally—although this message was aimed almost entirely at women—it was signed "Claude R. Wiekard, Chairman, Food Requirement Committee."

The Office of Defense Transportation encouraged women to leave trains and other public transportation to the troops. One of its posters showed a well-dressed woman carrying a bag of groceries in one arm and packages, a book, and a large purse in the other. Men in the shadows behind her carried their weapons and backpacks, while she said: "I'll Carry Mine, Too!" At the bottom was a conservation reminder, "Trucks and Tires Must Last Till Victory." The Treasury Department also printed huge numbers of posters to encourage war bond sales. A typical one showed two men and a woman working together on an airplane engine; it was captioned: "The



Sky's the Limit!" KEEP BUYING WAR BONDS. Others pulled harder at heartstrings. One of a blind man guided by a nurse reminded, "He CAN'T forget Pearl Harbor—Can you? BUY BONDS."

Recruitment of all sorts accounted for another large category of posters. The War Manpower Commission, for example, issued posters that encouraged women to take jobs in defense industries—and to encourage the men in their lives to accept this unconventionality. One such featured a man in a business suit and a woman in the sort of blue-collar clothing that would be worn to an aircraft factory or shipyard; she said, "I'm Proud That My Husband Wants Me to Do My Part." The commission also issued many posters designed to increase defense industry production rates. Texaco sponsored one aimed at reducing absenteeism; it got its message across with ironic wit: an evil-looking Japanese man smiled as he said, "Go Ahead, Please—Take Day Off." Another used a play on words: recalling the "Bundles for Britain" relief program during Britain's 1940 blitz, it read "Bundles for Berlin"—and showed bombs being loaded into a plane.

Military recruitment accounted for another major category of posters. Of those aimed at women's armed forces, a popular one read: "Are You a Girl With a Star-Spangled Heart? Join the WAC! Thousands of Army Jobs Need Filling." "Free a Marine to Fight!" was the consistent motto of the Women Marines. One of its posters depicted a uniformed woman doing the flight check on a prop plane, with "BE A MARINE" above her head. Nowhere was there any feminine language used. A 1944 series of posters for the WAVES also used non-sexist nomenclature and emphasized professional opportunity—but the commission for the series nonetheless went to a man, John Falter, who was in the Naval Reserve—and therefore presumably capable of going to sea and letting a WAVE (or at least a woman) be the artist.

For women, though, the most important recruiting posters addressed the shortage of desperately needed nurses, especially for the Army Nurse Corps (ANC). Picturing wounded men in hospital beds, they held such headlines as "SHE STOOD BY ME FOR HOURS" and "SHE GAVE ME COURAGE." The posters in this series carried the logo and address of the ANC, and after explanatory detail, concluded with "MORE NURSES ARE NEEDED." The Red Cross, the U.S. Public Health Service, and other organizations issued numerous posters proclaiming the need for nurses. Some moved beyond the message of sympathy for soldiers to imply that women might benefit personally from experience in the wider world. One example appealed: "Save His Life—And Find Your Own."

Nurse recruitment posters also reached out to teenage girls with messages such as "A Lifetime Education Free for High School Graduates who Qualify—U.S. Cadet Nurse Corps." Another, issued by the Office of War Information in 1944, not only reinforced the self-interested message above, but went further to imply that a young woman must hurry or lose her chance. It read, "Join the U.S. Cadet Nurse Corps—Only 5,416 Opportunities to Enlist this Month—A Lifetime Edu-

cation in a Proud Profession." The Veterans Administration issued still another series to recruit nurses late in the war, when the shortage was most severe. "Nurses are needed in Veterans Hospitals" ran the banner beneath a pajama-clad men in a wheelchair. These posters listed two addresses to write for further information; prior to zip codes, both were in Washington, D.C.'s Postal Zone 25.

Another theme stressed in posters was the importance of military secrecy. "Silence Means Security" read one with a woman in a WAC uniform; she held a finger to her lips to depict the "hush" message. Many of those messages were addressed to men: in contrast to the professional-looking WAC, for example, another poster portrayed a glamorous woman in furs; its message was aimed at men and read: "Allure, Or A Lure? Always Be Careful! It's Safer—Don't talk about Military Affairs." Another depicted a sexy woman in a nightclub drinking with soldiers; it read, "Keep Mum; She's Not So Dumb."

Messages on self-censorship were directed to everyone, not just those in the military. Workers in defense plants, for example, often had access to information that, merged with other information, could be important to a spy. One such poster showed pieces of a puzzle with keywords separated, but easily joined together to read "Convoy sails for England tonight." Its headline read, "BITS OF CARELESS TALK ARE PIECED TOGETHER BY THE ENEMY." A second showed a Gold Star, the symbol that a family a lost someone in the war, on a living room wall, with a sad-eyed cocker spaniel resting his chin on the dead sailor's scarf. It said simply: "Because Somebody Talked!" The secrecy issue, in fact, was so unfamiliar in a society accustomed to free speech that it may have gained more attention than any other topic. In any case, a National War Poster Competition—which included the Museum of Modern Art as a sponsor—chose a poster on secrecy as its winner. It portrayed a hand on a newspaper headline that began, "U.S. Ship Sunk" and tersely summarized, "Someone Talked!"

Although most posters addressed domestic issues, others educated people on foreign relations and the reasons why the nation was engaged in the war. The Office of War Information issued an especially somber one after Germany wiped out the Czech town of Lidice. Showing an androgynous person about to be executed, it read "This is Nazi brutality" and followed up with text that appeared to have just come off a teletype:

RADIO BERLIN—IT IS OFFICIALLY ANNOUNCED: ALL MEN OF LIDICE, CZECHOSLOVAKIA, HAVE BEEN SHOT: THE WOMEN DEPORTED TO A CONCENTRATION CAMP: THE CHILDREN SENT TO APPROPRIATE CENTERS—THE NAME OF THE VILLAGE WAS IMMEDIATELY ABOLISHED. 6/11/42/ 115P

From Czechoslovakia to China, posters were designed to increase American awareness of global realities. Some stressed variations of Asians, explaining why the Chinese were allies and the Japanese were enemies. Another showed Chinese people who had been attacked by the Japanese

already in the 1930s; it read: "Fighting for Five Years with Our Bare Hands." Artist Martha Sawyer, commissioned by United China Relief, drew a 1943 poster intended to reinforce the point of China's much longer war. It showed a Chinese soldier; his determined-looking wife, whose broken arm was in a cast; and their young daughter. It proclaimed, "China—First to Fight!"

Posters also were useful to explain that even though the Soviet Union had been viewed as an enemy in the 1930s (and would be again in the 1950s), it was an American ally in the 1940s and had suffered massive death and destruction before Americans were involved in the war. Women in Soviet posters almost always were strong: a 1942 one, for example, showed a larger-than-life woman and read, "Weapons for the Front from the Soviet Women." A more graphic one depicted a woman kneeling beside a dead girl; with a rifle in her hand, she shouted to the sky, "We Shall Have Our Revenge!"

Olga Burova was the creator of a series that portrayed an anxious yet determined woman held behind barbed wire; it said in Russian, "Our hope is in you, Red Warrior!" Others were in English and aimed at an American audience. Perhaps the strongest quoted General Douglas MacArthur: "The hopes of civilization rest on the Worthy Banners of the Courageous Russian Army." Another didn't bother to explain which of the many variations of eastern European women it portrayed: her shawl and her hard-working, care-worn image, with shattered buildings in the background, was enough. It said simply: "And We Talk About Sacrifice."

Enemies also used posters. One that Nazi Germany displayed in France after it surrendered showed a blond uniformed soldier holding a laughing boy in his arms; it read, "*Populations abandonnees, faites confiance au Soldat Allemand!*," or "Refugees trust German soldiers." Others, also published in French, translated to calming messages that would prove cruel lies. People on their way to slave labor saw signs that assured them, "When you work in Germany, you will be the ambassador of French workmanship." Another used a happy young mother and daughter who rejoiced, "The bad days are over! Papa is earning money in Germany." France's government in exile countered with a poster in English that revealed the falsehood of these promises. "We French workers warn you," it said, "defeat means slavery, starvation, death." A sign in the background was titled "Official Vichy Decree," a reference to the Nazi occupation government based at Vichy, France. Worker's hands, held high in surrender, obscured its lettering, but keywords were enough: "ages of 18 and 50 and unmarried persons ... obliged to ... work."

As the Nazi occupation lengthened and, especially in eastern Europe, German posters were less persuasive and more threatening. A 1944 one displayed in conquered Polish and Ukrainian territories simply but coldly inquired: "Who else is dissatisfied?" Another that made no attempt to change attitudes, but merely reinforced dictatorship, showed a radio microphone in the forefront; its background displayed locales such as "Moskau," "London," and "West," while large red

letters shouted "*verrater!*" The point was that listening to any radio broadcasts other than Nazi-authorized ones was forbidden.

The Japanese, too, used posters in an attempt to quell rebellion by people they had conquered. Bataan survivor Juanita Redmond wrote of Japanese posters that aimed to persuade Filipinos to desert their American allies; she found one "especially obnoxious." It showed "a hideous caricature of President Roosevelt sneering at a dead Filipino ... A pitiful Filipina knelled beside him, weeping and holding an infant ... Beneath was printed: Roosevelt the World Enemy No. 1." Others proclaimed:

Don't Obey the Americans!

Japanese forces are friends, not enemies, of the Filipinos. Don't Obey America's Orders, which may change your city into a battlefield.

Another reinforced this message:

Save the beautiful Philippines from war's havoc! Give up at once, lay aside your arms. Don't shed your blood for America. Return, return to your own sweet homes!

A third stressed the Japanese theme of "Asia for Asians" by depicting a Japanese boy and a Filipino girl; it read, "Shoulder to Shoulder, Let Us Bring the New Philippines." Other posters aimed to inculcate the Japanese view of their racial superiority, some in shockingly ways. An especially crude one played up the racist theme by depicting a grinning American man dropping his pants as he grabbed a dark-skinned woman, whose only clothing was a banana leaf. Perhaps the most tasteless was titled "Spring Dance" and depicted nude women dancing on soldiers' graves. Its text was a bad attempt at poetry, with these smiling, angel-like women saying:

We've got oomph and we've got curves,  
We've got stars and a lot of stripes;  
We've got passion and we've got breasts;  
We've got everything except our desire,  
And only the crosses mark them here.

As the Allies won the war, other posters replaced these. "Free Holland Welcomes the Soldiers of the Allies," declared a 1944 one in English. Throughout the war, those aimed at Americans frequently delivered postwar promises: a return of newly manufactured cars and household appliances, along with messages on peace and freedom. In an era when literacy still was fairly low and few visuals were available to ordinary people, posters were an important educational tool.

**See also: Army Nurse Corps; bond sales; Bataan; British women; Cadet Nurse Corps; censorship/secretcy; Chinese-American women; conservation; European Theater of Operations; food shortages; French women; Marines, Women; nurses; Office of War Information; Pacific Theater of Operations; radio; recruitment; Red Cross; Russian women; victory gardens; War Manpower Commission; WAVES**

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## POSTWAR

The war was scarcely underway before worry began over whether, at its end, women would give up the gains they were making. During the same time that the media urged women to leave their presumably comfortable homes and take defense jobs, it also conveyed the subtle message that this appeal should not be taken too seriously. The invitation was extended, it should be understood, for the duration only.

Already two years before the war ended, for example, *Woman's Home Companion* advised, "Give Back the Jobs." Margaret Culkin Banning had barely published her recruitment book, *Women For Defense* (1942), when she wrote a magazine article, "Will They Go Back Home?" in 1943. In 1944, *Saturday Evening Post* warned "Watch Out for the Women," while *Atlantic*'s blunt summary the next year was "Getting Rid of the Women." More than any of the era's issues, this one was posed as a question: "How Come No Jobs for Women?" and "Can the Girls Hold Their Jobs in Peacetime?" and "Where Will the Postwar Chances Lie?" and "What Chance for Women?" Instead of the 1942 buzzword of "opportunity," women now confronted "chance."

Female role models also questioned aloud. Mary Anderson, head of the Women's Bureau of the Labor Department, wrote "16,000,000 Women: What Will Happen After?" in 1943. In the same year, Elinore Herrick, a top labor/management consultant, asked "What About Women After the War?" Frieda Miller, also a labor expert with a specialization in African Americans, added to the discussion with "Negro Women Workers" in 1943 and "What's Happened to Rosie the Riveter?" in 1946. Margaret Hickey of the War Manpower Commission and feminist author Alma Lutz tried to convey more optimism with 1946 pieces, "What Next for Women?" and "Woman's Hour." U.S. Senator Francis Myers of Pennsylvania showed himself to be unusually thoughtful with "Don't Take It Out on the Women," while famed anthropologist Margaret Mead summarized the consciousness raising with "What Women Want."



This attempt at morale building probably failed with many women; they could see the underlying condescension. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

The public expected a postwar crash. They had formed their economic views in the 1920s and 1930s and fundamentally were fatalists: without necessarily being able to articulate their opinions, many believed that depression was the capitalistic norm and prosperity was the exception. "Post-war America will not be a land of limitless opportunity," predicted popular preacher Randolph Ray. "Jobs will be scarce ... Even at our peak of prosperity, millions lived on the brink of starvation." *Christian Century* and other such publications stressed world hunger, calling on Americans to feed the famished by returning to rationing. Postwar children grew up being told to clean their plate because children elsewhere were starving.

Prewar people also tended to see employment as a sort of charity that should be meted out according to need—to men, who were the presumed head of households. The war replaced this maxim with another based on the needs of industry, and, for a few years, those who were traditionally excluded from the hiring line had an opportunity to earn. War, for them, meant a chance to pay off debts and save against the depression they knew would come. Prosperity,



in this view, was a aberration made possible only with the sacrifice of young lives.

The first step for advocates for women and other excluded groups was to challenge such pessimistic tenets—in the face of what seemed a negating reality. The Ohio River town of Evansville, Indiana, for example, shows the extent to which women performed in traditionally male jobs and were disproportionately laid off. When the war wound down in 1945, about ten thousand workers in that town lost their jobs, 90 percent of whom were women. A large number refused to take the jobs offered them by unemployment compensation officials, expressing shock at the low wages considered standard for “women’s work.” This situation repeated itself all over the nation, but Congress was too absorbed with other things to pay attention to proposals for equal pay. Even though Mary T. Norton chaired the House Labor Committee, the notion of raising women’s pay at a time of layoffs, not surprisingly, went nowhere.

Other economic fundamentals, however, had made this era profoundly different from that after World War I. Partly because of the leadership of Labor Secretary Frances Perkins, the nation now had unemployment insurance, Social Security, and other coping mechanisms. Midway through the war, Mary Anderson re-framed the debate for the postwar, telling readers not to “think of our economy in the old terms.” First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt made the same point in a 1943 speech to the Business and Professional Women’s Clubs. Although the details were not yet clear even in her prescient mind, what she was envisioning would turn out to be the postwar Marshall Plan—which, by providing former allies and enemies with money to buy from the United States, surged the American economy forward in a way undreamed of in 1943. Careful attention to price controls during the war, too, prevented the inflation that followed World War I. The Roosevelt administration studied history and learned from it, and the pessimists’ predictions proved wrong. The decade after the war was the most prosperous to that point in national history.

Women’s place in this postwar prosperity remained an unanswered question—but that it was asked was in itself important. Many polls on the subject boiled down to one, still somewhat tentative, conclusion: most women had gone to work thinking they would do so “for the duration,” but had discovered that they liked being part of the labor force and wanted to hang on to their jobs. *Business Week* traced the responses from 1942 and concluded in 1944:

As many as 95 per cent of women war workers planned to quit as soon as victory was certain ... Polls began to reveal that the percentage...was dropping sharply. The trend has been steady, until now every one of the 80,000 women working in Chicago radio plants wants to stay on.

Ambivalence and contradiction nonetheless prevailed, as a majority of both men and women also told a *Fortune* survey that “married women “should not be allowed to hold jobs.” The key to this confusion seems to be in whether an interviewee was thinking abstractly or personally. In a theo-

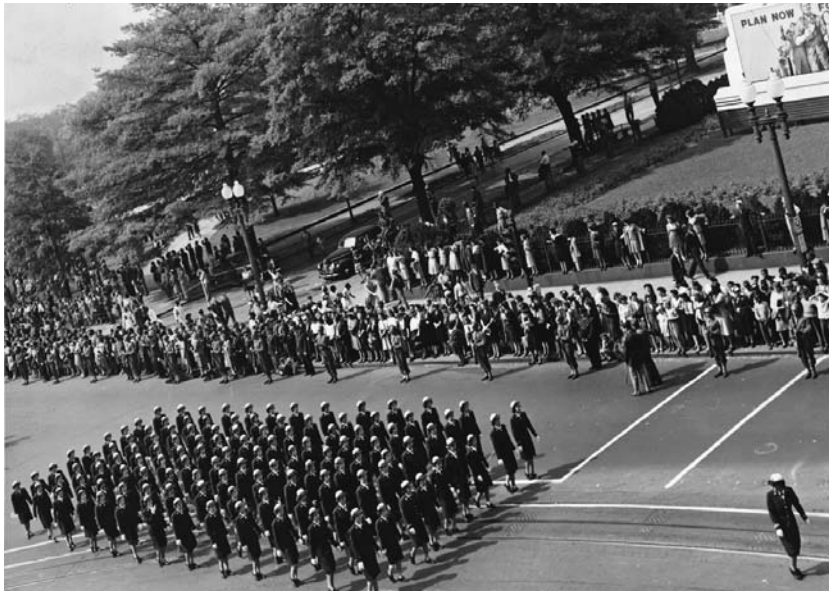
retical discussion of woman’s proper place, people said it was at home; in judging one’s own situation or that of his wife, the same person was much more liberal. The two-thirds of women who told pollsters that they intended to keep working did in fact continue to work or seek work. Although female employment plummeted from 19.5 million to 15.5 million in the first nine months after V-E Day, it began rising again in 1946 and continued steadily thereafter. Dorothy Thompson was right when she said in 1943: “there is no example in which a class or group of people who once have succeeded in expanding the area of their lives is ever persuaded again to restrict it.”

Rosie the Riveter transformed herself into Pam the Pink-Collar Worker—and in doing so, she unwittingly entered a segment of the economy that would boom, while her man was more likely to go back to his blue-collar job that would stagnate and die in the post-industrial economy. It had been a blue-and-white collar world before the war, with little room for pink, and while the wartime attention went to the Rosies, other women were quietly changing that. In the 1930s, men dominated commercial counters as ticket sellers, bank tellers, and retail clerks, but women would dominate in such jobs in the postwar world.

Male images of desirability in women also changed because of the war. “Once upon a time,” Howard Whitman wrote just after Pearl Harbor, “it may have been all right for a man to marry an ornament ... Today John wants a wife who can make herself useful.” Veterans returning from the horror of combat were not attracted to girlish giddiness: what they wanted in a woman was a slightly younger version of the cool, competent nurses they had met in the war—who was willing to have children.

“Fondness for kids” rated at the top of an early-war survey of men conducted by Louise Paine Benjamin. Both women and men told postwar pollsters that they wanted large families, although not as large as their parents often had. Gallup found that three+ children was the ideal for 77 percent of interviewees. The baby boom at the war’s end was a happy affirmation of the future by young people who felt fortunate to have survived, but the long-term trend of the twentieth century would show this rising birth rate to be a temporary blimp on an otherwise downward trend. As the century continued, Americans increasingly opted for quality over quantity, and women especially opted for space in their lives beyond motherhood.

Some wanted college, although many more women continued to work and support their veteran husbands, whose tuition was paid by the GI Bill. Postwar colleges, in fact, were so overcrowded with male veterans that many states gender-integrated their previously separate colleges for male and female students. Proponents of single-sex education consider this a loss, but the eventual effect of co-education was to break down old walls of separate spheres. That had breakdown also had begun when women enlisted in the military, even though postwar America usually was less welcoming to female veterans than to male ones. Many former WAC



WAVES march in Washington near the war's end. Note the billboard in the upper right, which urges people to plan for the postwar era. *U.S. Navy Photo, Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

and WAVES said that potential employers considered their military training and experience as irrelevant, and they were much less likely to know of the benefits to which they were entitled under the GI Bill. A few female military veterans said they came home to families that expected them to return to subordinate roles, but more independently shaped their own careers and/or created their own families.

Like the world itself, families were democratized by the war, and that also was a speed-up of centuries-long transition away from patriarchy. The instability inherent in this transformation exhibited itself clearly during the telescoped years of the war. Children grew up quickly and faced death at an early age, something that naturally gave them more power with patriarchs. The rootlessness of millions of moving wartime people, both men and women, meant a geographical tear in the family fabric. Rising divorce rates and especially the adoption of new roles by women—all signaled changes that many found frightening, but that nonetheless would continue with daughters and granddaughters.

Such fears rarely were acknowledged by mainstream media, and almost never by advertisers. Instead, they happily portrayed a postwar of nuclear families living in a dream house, enjoying on all the things that money could not buy during the war. Literally millions of young women worked in defense industries and saved so that they could buy a refrigerator, electric stove, phonograph, and countless other things that were not manufactured during the war. Moreover, they intended to put these things in a house that they owned. They would have no more landlords and emphatically agreed with Dorothy Thompson's forecast early in 1945: "it will be the aim of every American to have a home for his family—not a series of shifting apartments."

Cecil Brown was typical of some male advertisers who cynically thought that "we will have to sell [women] on the idea of the home, just as we sold them the idea of going into war work." Without so baldly stating its manipulative

aim, advertising did in fact encourage a dream house and more—but women also were capable of envisioning these things for themselves. To the extent that there was a conspiratorial campaign to return women to homemaking, the dream house image succeeded beyond its creators' wildest dreams: indeed, it soon went full circle, negating any aim of turning most women into full-time homemakers. Women and their families soon wanted not only the dream house, but also a television, a freezer, a clothes dryer, and other new products—and wanted them enough that women went back to work to pay for them.

It was indeed a revolution, but a revolution without manifesto and without declaration, and accomplished so quietly and gradually and ambivalently that even the victors did not realize that they were winning. It was a revolution in fact, not in philosophy, as many still did not acknowledge the feminist lives they were beginning to live. Those who dared to dream of a less burdened life often were scorned as though they were believing in science fiction. A writer for *Current History* was more than a little skeptical:

They paint dream pictures of huge low-cost housing ... There the home duties all but disappear ... Shopping and transportation difficulties vanish ... No longer will women waste their skills ... Upon the joint income of a man and his wife, higher living standards will be achieved ... This portrayal of a new world seems ... far in the future.

He was wrong. Within a decade, millions of people became homeowners with support from the GI Bill. Shopping centers soon appeared, with stores conveniently concentrated and longer hours to accommodate women's schedules. Transportation transformed daily life: although excessive car use would be a problem decades later, women in the postwar years were thrilled to put their kids in the car and turn the key. It gave them much more freedom and happiness than they had during the war years, when with babies and bundles

in hand, they waited in snow or rain for buses or streetcars. Most important, women no longer had to allow their brains to atrophy in the kitchen and laundry room, as new appliances did many jobs much faster.

They could take time to join the League of Women Voters or the PTA, and such organizations reached their zenith in the decade after the war. They could get involved in issues, like the old female warhorses in the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom who came back for another stab at world sanity. The immensity of the war made it clear that peace was not merely a matter of good feelings, and unnoted women worked at it in ways that were very different from simplistic prewar isolationists.

The war had expanded women's global awareness, which was demonstrated with increased library usage and attendance at serious lectures. According to Nobel Prize winning Emily Balch, more than 25 million people paid admission at local auditoriums in 1945 to ponder world questions. They showed generosity in word and deed, as they gave huge amounts of money to both allies and enemies, took refugees into their homes, and sent care packages abroad for years after the war was over. Even if the details were overwhelming, the spirit for peace was strong, and most women repeatedly said that something good must result from all that the world had suffered. They put tremendous faith in the new United Nations and especially its humanitarian arm, UNESCO. Almost orphan-like after the death of the only president many had ever known, they watched it for signs of hope and wisdom.

The war made clear that racism was closely related to fascism, and especially African-American women spent the postwar era making that point. The same was true for gender discrimination: authoritarianism takes many forms and often disguises itself as benign, but the roots of the gestapo and those of patriarchy are the same. The end of totalitarianism must necessarily lead to the end of paternalism, as there no longer was place for anyone who claimed the right to force others to live his way. There certainly were backwards steps, especially during the early 1950s reign of right-wingers in the Senate, but on the whole, the war was a rejection of dictatorship, which increased individual freedom and tolerance of those who are different. In defeating the solidly masculine militarism of Nazi Germany and Imperial Japan, the world said that it preferred the more feminine values of cooperation and caring.

*See also:* **advertising; African-American women; Anderson, Mary; Balch, Emily Greene; Business and Professional Women's Clubs; birth control/birth rate; children; colleges; courtship; demobilization; divorce; electronics industry; employment; food shortages; Herrick, Elinore; Hickey, Margaret; GI Bill; housework; inflation; League of Women Voters; labor force; landladies; layoffs; Lutz, Alma; Norton, Mary T.; nurses; pay; Perkins, Frances; rationing; recruitment; refugees; Roosevelt, Eleanor; Thompson, Dorothy; travel; United Nations; V-E Day; veterans; WAVES; Women's Army Corps (WAC); Women's International League for Peace and Freedom**

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## PREGNANCY

One of the fundamentals of fascism, of course, is that women's primary function is reproduction. Neither Japan nor Germany encouraged their women to work in defense factories: both thought that the necessary production could be done by slave labor, including the women of conquered nations. Their own women were to be full-time mothers of future soldiers, and this attitude was so thorough that an active male member of the Nazi party was encouraged to divorce his wife if she did not become pregnant. Hanna Voight told oral historian Sally Hayton-Keeva:

The man I married was a nice man, but the war years changed him. For instance, there was a rule Hitler made that if an officer's wife didn't have a baby within five years of their marriage, then her husband should divorce her. I thought it would be only a matter of time before he got rid of me ... After not having children for seven years, in the first four years of the war I had five!

Americans would not approve of a system that encouraged divorce for any reason, but no issue about women's changing wartime roles garnered as much attention as did her children or possible children. Controversy began even before a baby was born. Discussing the "touchy problem" of maternity leave, *Business Week* expressed male confusion, anxiety, and guilt about pregnancy:

In many cases, the first reaction of the production boss who finds that one of his workers is pregnant is, "get her out of here quick." Chief reason is fear of a damage suit if the work causes any injury (particularly a miscarriage). Some employers consider it "indelicate" for an obviously pregnant woman to stick to her workbench, and a few think it embarrasses men workers. Other companies discharge pregnant women because of a genuine conviction that continued work is harmful to mother and child ... In a recent survey ... the Department of Labor found that the majority of employers fired women as soon as pregnancy was discovered.

A pregnant woman simply had no right to work, no matter how much she may have needed her job. There was no federal policy, and just six states had any regulations on the subject. A follow-up *Business Week* report in October 1943 added, "comparatively few union contracts take cognizance of the pregnancy problems, even in industries where there is a high percentage of women workers." Of the seventy-three factories surveyed by the Labor Department, only one had any

policy on maternity leave. Yet, despite the fact that the Labor Department investigation could not turn up a single case of a woman having sued an employer for a pregnancy-related injury, firing pregnant women continued to be routine.

*Business Week* parenthetically stated that "one of the most common causes of abortion is a woman's fear of losing her job," and *Harper's* took the issue further, pointing out that "the problem would be solved more easily if every pregnant woman wanted her baby, but more don't than do." Red Cross records confirmed this, as sociologist Eleanor Boll reported that "requests for services for unmarried mothers" more than doubled during the first two years of the war. It and other agencies also worked with women whose husbands sent them letters saying that they impregnated another woman. Red Cross offices near army posts and naval bases regularly dealt with fathers of unwed daughters, many of whom intended to hunt down the soldier and force a "shotgun wedding." Sometimes the man had used a false name and could not be tracked down, or he had gone overseas or already was married. According to historian Emily Yellin, women beyond their teens were even more likely to be illegitimately pregnant:

During World War II the rate of babies born to unmarried women rose from 7.0 per 1,000 in 1939 to 10.0 in 1945 ... Approximately 650,000 babies were born to single women. The rate was highest among women aged twenty to thirty. Since abortion was illegal, no records of its occurrence exist, but anecdotes from the military and from the factories tell stories of women, single and married, who had illegal abortions. Often it meant that they were able to save their marriages from their own infidelities, or single women were able to save themselves from being branded as immoral.

Homes for unwed mothers still were common, and most pregnant women who did not marry went to one of these, hid the pregnancy from friends and most family, and gave up the child for adoption. Movie star Ingrid Bergman set a different example, but single motherhood would remain far from acceptable, especially for white women, until nearly the end of the twentieth century. At the same time, however, the war was not yet a year old when sociologist Ernest Burgess wrote, "the double standard is on its way out." He hastened to add, though, that this did not condone female promiscuity. Instead, the developing trend was a strengthened distinction between pre-marital and extra-marital sex, and a lessening of anxiety about losing one's virginity to a man one intended to marry. "Moralists still striving to maintain the value placed on virginity," he continued, "are losing the full force of two of their stock arguments ... The fear of pregnancy is diminished by the use of contraceptives, and the danger of venereal infection [is] lessened by ... prophylactics."

Especially overseas, the military issued condoms to men in huge quantities, and sex education was part of their basic training. That was not at all the case for military women, as men dealt much more candidly with sex-related issues than did women. For example, although the war was more than halfway over when *Business Week* published its reports on pregnant women in the workplace, women's magazines

never addressed the subject at all. Their silence is particularly striking in view of the loud debate on the possibility of pregnancy for women in the military. Especially during the “slander campaign” against the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps, there was widespread discussion of pregnancy’s unique effect on women. Unintended pregnancies rarely happened in the military, however, while the millions of women in defense industries—who were much more likely to have relationships that could result in pregnancy—received virtually no attention.

Finally, in the fall of 1944, the War Department got around to setting policy for its civilian employees. According to *Survey Midmonthly*, it “put into effect an official pregnancy policy governing the employment of women in its more than 1,000 plants..., where 500,000 of the workers are women, more than 60 percent of them married.” While still cognizant of employers’ interests, the new policy generally was aimed at protecting pregnant women from arbitrary bosses. It set prenatal and post-delivery leave limits; disallowed night work, overtime, and heavy assignments; and most progressively, protected the woman’s job seniority.

The government’s male-dominated rationing boards never did give thought to pregnancy. Not one dietician or home economist served on the committee that advised the War Food Administration on nutritional needs; instead it was entirely composed of male physicians. Not surprisingly, they took no cognizance of pregnant or lactating women when food rationing rules were written. This oversight was even more harmful because most pregnant and nursing women fell into the category of “small families,” a category that the public agreed was discriminated against. There is a sad irony in the probability that the people who were least well-nourished under the rationing system were the wives and young children of soldiers.

Many of these undernourished pregnant women were “camp followers,” wives who followed their husbands to training camps within the United States. The military did not approve of this practice, and some adopted attitudes that were close to misogyny. Barbara Klaw told of a gentle, uncomplaining expectant mother near Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri. Her doctor, anticipating a difficult delivery, “called out to the camp for my husband to come in,” but as the woman concluded sadly, “I guess his C.O. [commanding officer] would not let him.” In the words of the reporting hospital volunteer, it was another of the “Army’s stupid, needless cruelties,” contributing nothing to the war or to national morale, while baldly exhibiting disdain for the vital role of motherhood.

This new mother might have considered herself lucky to be in a hospital. Women had only barely become accustomed to using them for childbirth: home births, often attended by midwives or female relatives, were the norm until after World War I. Hospital deliveries became more common in the Roaring Twenties, but during the Great Depression of the 1930s, many women could not afford anything other than a home birth. Middle-class women thus were only beginning to see hospitalization as routine for childbirth in the 1940s—

when hospitals were overcrowded because of the war, and they again were told to deliver at home. The extent to which women’s lives were controlled by the medical profession can be seen in that during the 1950s, a week-long stay was standard.

The 1950s would be considered the era of the “baby boom,” but *Ladies Home Journal* used that term early in 1943, acknowledging that increased pregnancies were a fact of war-time life. When faced with the possibility that a man might lose his life, millions of couples looked to the future and created a legacy. Most professional opinion givers advised against it, but young people made their own life-affirming decisions. Even civilian couples in Japanese prison camps in Asia had children, as did Japanese-American women in similar internment camps within the United States.

Perhaps the most extraordinary wartime pregnancy was that of Mary Lou Baker of St. Petersburg, Florida. An attorney who kept her maiden name, she was elected to the state House in 1942, after her husband went into the military. When he came home on leave, she became pregnant—but told no one until she was re-elected in 1944. Representative Baker’s pregnancy set a precedent and was a perfect example of what Margaret Sanger meant when she campaigned for every child to be a wanted child.

*See also:* **birth control/birth rate; camp followers; children; child care; courtship; defense industries; dieticians; divorce; home economics; hospitals; Japanese-American women; magazines; marriage; movies; physicians; prisoners of war; rationing; Red Cross; “slander campaign”; unions; venereal disease; wives of servicemen; Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps**

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## PRISONERS OF WAR (POW)

As late as the Persian Gulf War of the 1990s, media debate about military women as potentially prisoners of war clearly demonstrated that even well-educated Americans were ignorant of the fact that thousands of American women were POWs during World War II. The majority were civilians, women and children in the Pacific Theater of Operations, with relatively few in Europe. Imprisoned by the Japanese, they were included with Canadians, Britons, and other Europeans who happened to be in that part of the world when it fell; the largest number were some seventy thousand members of Dutch colonial families in Indonesia. All became enemies of the Japanese when its ally, Germany, declared war on their mother nations. As the war worsened for Japan, it became more and more ruthless in its treatment of these "enemy aliens." Enemy aliens within the United States also were interned if they were of Japanese heritage; this was rarely the case with Germans and Italians, the major enemies in Europe.

Numerical estimates of Pacific internees vary wildly, from "a handful of women" (Ronald Bailey) to "approximately 40,000 Western civilian women" (Bernice Archer) to "more than 130,000 civilians" (Christina Twomey). A statistical history by Van Waterford, who spent his teenage years as a POW in Indonesia, detailed POW camps from Manchuria in the north to Java in the south and concluded that during the first six months of 1942, "about 350,000 European and American prisoners were in Japanese hands." The number of male military POWs, of course, would rise as the war went on, but all military women and the vast majority of civilian women were imprisoned within its first few months.

Because the Japanese did not do a ground invasion at Pearl Harbor, no POWs were taken in that shocking attack—but civilian women had fled from imprisonment years earlier, when Japan invaded China's coastal cities in the late 1930s. After Pearl Harbor, Japan followed up with numerous invasions of Asian cities, and Hong Kong fell on Christmas Day, 1941. In *Prisoner of the Japs* (1943), journalist Gwen Dew wrote about her terrifying experience. Emily "Mickey" Hahn also was a journalist there—with a newborn daughter. Nonetheless, she risked her life to bring food to prisoners. Both Americans, Dew and Hahn were released in a 1943 prisoner exchange. Frances Long, the daughter of an American diplomat, also wrote that year about her imprisonment after the fall of Shanghai.

Shanghai and Hong Kong were just a blip on the news for most Americans, though, as the important attacks for the U.S. military were in the Philippine Islands. Soon chased out of Manila, women in both the Army Nurse Corps (ANC) and the Navy Nurse Corps (NNC) moved with the troops down the Bataan Peninsula and finally to the island of Cor-

regidor. Several nurses who escaped to Australia and then to the United States published articles about their experience: among them were ANC members D. D. Engles and Eunice Hatchitt; Juanita Redmond's book, *I Served on Bataan*, came out in 1943. They pointed out that sixty-eight ANC and eleven NNC members remained at the Santo Tomas POW camp, a former university north of Manila.

The nurses' articles were in major magazines; the books were published by major houses; and the nurses even were honored at the White House—but somehow the fact of female prisoners never truly penetrated the public consciousness. The movie based on their experience, *So Proudly We Hail* (1943) ironically may have contributed to this negation of reality: it portrayed them in stereotypical ways that allowed viewers to walk out of the theater without quite realizing the fact of real women in combat or as POWs.

Lt. Hattie Brantley was one of the ANC women imprisoned at Santo Tomas in the spring of 1942:

We didn't get mail until Christmas of 1944, and I got a letter saying my father had died in 1943. That really hurt, and at the time, I didn't care whether I went home or not, because he was such a special person. But then, we began seeing US aircraft and we knew they would rescue us. We had faith, faith, faith. They were always coming for us ... tomorrow. I saw a plane shot down, and I knew he gave his life trying to rescue me. It really bothered me. We were told [by the Japanese] that if the Americans tried to rescue us, we would be annihilated. One day, we heard gunfire at the gate and a Sherman tank drove up. We thought the [Japanese] had come to do us in. So we hid. Then a head popped out of the turret and said, "Aren't there any Americans here?"

Indeed there were—and not just the nurses about whom so relatively much was written at the time. In comparison with fewer than a hundred nurses, Waterford estimates that "about 4,000 men, women, and children" were interned at Santo Tomas—and more civilians were in camps elsewhere in the islands. His chart on the ten "CICs" (Civilian Internment Camps) throughout the Philippines concluded:

Internees by gender	Internees by nationality	Deaths
4,200 men	6,000 Americans	450
2,300 women	1,500 British	3
1,300 children	150 Dutch	0
150 other	0	

Keeping records or a journal was risky, as the Japanese punished those caught with them, but a number of women nonetheless did. Among the American civilian women who made notes and later published books on their imprisonment in the Philippines were Teresa Cates, a civilian nurse who hid her diary in a drainpipe; Esther Hamilton, a Christian missionary; Bessie Sneed, who was married to a mining executive; Lorraine Carr, whose husband was an Army physician; and Elizabeth Vaughn, who later used her experience for a treatise in sociology. Red Cross worker Margaret Utinsky



Women with the International Red Cross visit prisoners of war. They probably delivered canned foods, soap, toothpaste, vitamins, and other essentials packed by American women. *Courtesy of Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*



wrote dramatically of being one of the first to witness the scene of the Bataan Death March.

The most widely read book was published the year the war ended: *Life* correspondent Shelley Smith Mydans wrote about the fall of Manila as an autobiographical novel; she spent the war imprisoned with her husband at Santo Tomas. Other civilian women did not have publishing connections, however, and most of their memoirs were issued in the years when feminism flagged. The much larger numbers of male POWs, of course, published much more, and military nurses also had more systematic opportunities for publicity—and so, although there were many more civilian women in POW camps, it became easy for historians to overlook their experience. One who never published the three hundred-page journal she wrote on a grocery ledger was Anne Goldthorpe, a Canadian nurse who moved to Washington, D.C., after the war. A 1983 *Washington Post* story said:

Goldthorpe and her companions in Zamboanga were transferred to three internment camps ... Her diary tells of harrowing voyages aboard Japanese freighters, during which sailors molested the women and the prisoners had to fight off dozens of aggressive rats. She vividly recounts how everyone was forced to bow properly before the Japanese authorities...

As food rations dwindled, dysentery, beriberi..., and malaria set in, and the number of deaths grew day by day. A total of 456 civilians died in confinement at Santo Tomas. The prisoners ate everything from weeds and tree bark to tooth powder ...

"I worried last night about a lump in my stomach," she wrote on January 5, 1945 .... "Then I found it was my backbone. I never expected to feel that from the front."

While American attention was focused on the Philippines, Guam fell without a serious fight in January 1942, and five women in the Navy Nurse Corps became prisoners. One was Leona Jackson, who wrote about her experience for the *American Journal of Nursing*. The women were taken to the

Japanese mainland and spent six months in a prisoner of war camp at Kobe prior to a POW exchange the following June. The exchange was arranged by neutral Sweden, and the NNC women joined some civilian women who came home on the *Gripsholm*. That ship would do another POW exchange in 1943, and it also brought Red Cross supplies that many prisoners credited for keeping them alive.

One of the 1943 *Gripsholm* passengers was Dorothy Davis (later Thompson). She had grown up in Shanghai, the daughter of a wealthy American businessman, and her sister Eva had preceded her to New York City for education. Dorothy arrived just weeks before Japan bombed Shanghai in 1937; her parents fled to Manila, and after her 1940 graduation from nursing school at Columbia University, she rejoined them. The next year, of course, Japanese troops invaded Manila and the family was interned at Santo Tomas. She was chosen for the 1943 prisoner exchange because, while interned, she suffered rheumatic fever that caused a heart murmur. An very sensible young woman, she made a list of the names and addresses of the military women at Santo Tomas and spent her time onboard the *Gripsholm* writing letters to their families: it was the first time that families or the Office of the Surgeon General learned about exactly who was there. Unlike her aunt—a refugee from India who constantly complained that she couldn't find domestic servants for her Manhattan apartment—young Davis felt so guilty about leaving others behind that, despite her heart condition, she spent her time trying to get into the Army Nurse Corps. She even arranged a private lunch with First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, and a few weeks later, in January 1944, ANC head Florence Blanchfield personally swore Davis into the military. That same month, the *American Journal of Nursing* carried her story about Santo Tomas, and she managed to be with the troops who liberated it in February 1945. The Army decorated her with its Bronze Star.

There would be no POW exchange or decorations, however, for Native Alaskan women and their teacher, Etta Jones.

They were captured in June of 1942, when Japanese troops invaded two Aleutian islands. Jones was separated from the Aleutians and spent the entire war as a prisoner in Japan. Fascists there also were racists, especially towards other Asians, and the Aleutians were treated much worse. One, Anecia Prokopioff, died on their September journey to Japan and was buried at sea; twenty-two others died during the next three years of imprisonment. The details of their story remain in need of further scholarly research.

That the NNC women were exchanged, while the civilian Alaskan women were not, is a demonstration of Japanese values. According to historian Bruce Elleman, “the Japanese government ranked women and female children as the lowest priority” for exchange,” while “on the U.S. side, its top choices included teachers, missionaries, women, and children, with the latter two groups being given top priority for exchange.” In contrast, the Japanese government wanted the return of its wealthy merchants, as well as academics who were knowledgeable about the non-Asian world. The United States and its allies also tried hard to get their citizens out of prison camps that military intelligence told them were the worst in terms of unhealthiness, but instead of camp circumstances, Japanese officials cared more about individual detainees, especially those of high social status.

That continued even onboard ships for POW exchanges. Elleman said that according to Gwen Terasaki, an American woman married to a Japanese man, “staterooms were distributed ... according to the status of the particular official”; because of that, she and her husband were provided with a superior room. When they traveled without male escort, “Japanese women and children were accorded a particularly low status.” By 1943, when Japan had its top men back home, Elleman continued, its “interest in the exchange program

diminished.” The U.S. State Department wanted the return of “many more thousands of American non-officials detained in Japanese camps,” but its effort was to little avail.

Many civilian couples hid from the Japanese in mountains and jungles for months before they either were captured or, hungry and tired and afraid, they surrendered. Some were allowed to stay together at the same prison camp, although in separate dormitories, but the majority of female POWs lived without a husband—or even without knowing where he was. Many women had children with them and/or were pregnant when they were interned, and, in almost every POW camp where men and women had even occasional access to each other, babies were born. At Santo Tomas, where most Americans were, about forty infants clearly were conceived after internment. Navy Nurse Dorothy Danner, who worked in make-shift hospitals at both Santo Tomas and Los Banos, seemed especially fond of these babies—one of whom was born on February 23, 1945, just hours before liberating American troops arrived.

Japanese guards, however, strongly disapproved of such evidence of sexual activity, and they punished men at least as severely as women. While condemning this as “immoral,” they also refused to perform wedding ceremonies: according to scholar Teresa Kaminski, the first wedding was not held until March of 1944. Between civilians Wilma Park and Carroll Dickey, it was at Camp Holmes on the island of Luzon, and somehow the bride managed to obtain a lovely wedding gown. Throughout internment, though, both wed and unwed couples continued to conceive children. Except for Goldthorpe’s brief mention of a stillborn birth to an unwed mother, records do not indicate a disproportionate number of miscarriages or congenital defects, despite maternal malnourishment. Some women, of course, chose not to



These children became prisoners of war when Japan conquered their South Pacific homes early in the war. They are posing with their cook. *Courtesy of National Archives*

take such risks, and, according to historian Bernice Archer, especially at Hong Kong's Camp Stanley, "abortions were carried out..., provoking a lengthy debate between medical staff and clergy in the camp."

Of course, many women (and some men) did not know whether or not their spouses still were alive. A. V. H. Hartendorp, a Santo Tomas leader who wrote detailed books, told of a family that was able to reunite in January 1944. The woman had gone to Manila for Christmas shopping two years earlier and got caught in the invasion. She thought that her husband and three young children were interned in Davao, in the southern Philippines, but there also were rumors that these people had drowned on their way to Santo Tomas. When five buses of "starved-looking" people arrived from Davao, she broke through the guards to embrace her family; the youngest had changed so much that she did not recognize him. Although no feminist, Hartendorp acknowledged that women and children "did much to brighten the camp," and he added:

The Commandant was always most easily approached on matters affecting the welfare of the children. The guards, too, did their best to make friends with them. While the parents did not look upon this with favor, it unquestionably improved relations ... The children quite lost their fear of the Japanese soldiers. On one occasion, a new group [of guards] suddenly started machine-gun drill..., perhaps to impress the internees. The grim effect was entirely spoiled by a large group of children who rushed ... behind the soldiers, shouting and laughing and imitating them. The soldiers soon stopped the exercises.

That was hugely different and infinitely more humane than the way in which German fascists treated Jewish children. Because Americans abroad were well aware of the developing political situation in Europe in the 1930s, most left the continent before they could become POWs; the relatively few who remained often were there by choice and usually fell into the category of refugees. The only military woman who was an official prisoner in the European Theater of Operations (ETO) was the Army Nurse Corps' Reba Z. Whittle. A flight nurse based in England, she was shot down over German territory on September 27, 1944. Second Lieutenant Whittle was released after four months of captivity, when Germany began losing the war in January 1945, and her story recently has been published. Under the leadership of First Lieutenant Agnes Jensen, thirteen ANC members dodged POW status for months after crash landing in Albania.

Other American nurses in the ETO treated German and Italian POWs—some of whom were shocked to discover African-American women there. The first POWs were German pilots shot down in England, but because that island was tremendously overcrowded by 1943, POWs increasingly were taken by ship to camps in the United States. ANC First Lieutenant Yvonne Humphrey wrote in the *American Journal of Nursing* about the first such ship, when she was "the only woman aboard." She treated both Americans and Germans who had been wounded during combat in North Africa. Upon arrival in the United States, POWs were imprisoned in rural

locations from Florida to Washington state. Many replaced American women in agriculture, as under armed guard, they harvested everything from oranges to apples.

No attempt will be made in the bibliography to list books on interactions between those POWs and Americans, but as can be seen below, many female prisoners of the Japanese have found their voices and published their stories of imprisonment. Feminist scholars, too, have added to the analytical literature in the last decade. Yet most Americans remain almost stubbornly unaware of this important aspect of our history, and debates about women in combat continue without reference to their proven valor.

**See also: Alaskan women; Army Nurse Corps; Bataan; Blanchfield, Florence; Corregidor; food shortages; decorations; domestic workers; enemy aliens; European Theater of Operations; intelligence, military; Japanese-American women; Jensen, Agnes; magazines; Navy Nurse Corps; North Africa; Pacific Theater of Operations; pregnancy; Red Cross; refugees; Roosevelt, Eleanor**

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## PROSTITUTION

Americans approached the topic of prostitution in World War II much more sensibly than in World War I. That war saw Congress pass the Chamberlain-Kahn Act (1918), which placed almost every woman under suspicion of prostitution. Among its violations of civil liberties was a 9:00 p.m. for women—but not men—in towns near military posts. Women in such places had to carry identification to show that they were related to their male escorts or had parental permission to be with their dates. Any woman suspected by military police of prostitution was subject to a mandatory physical examination, and by the War Department's own estimate, fifteen thousand women were imprisoned under this federal law. Countless more were subjected to humiliating interrogation.

The law expired in 1923, and the 1941 May Act that replaced it was less onerous. It made prostitution near military bases a federal offense, but the intent was largely to make it easier for local police to keep prostitution out of sight and confined to known red-light districts. War Department policy recognized the reality of prostitution, and, instead of its earlier emphasis on female chastity, switched to educating men and providing them with condoms—which were intended to

prevent venereal disease. The aim was not to protect women from unwanted pregnancies; instead, the military wanted its soldiers and sailors to be fit to fight. Government-sponsored posters warned: "Prostitution Spreads Syphilis and Gonorrhea—Know for Sure—Get a Blood Test for Syphilis." A series of such posters were displayed in places where men, but not women and children, would see them.

The military initially rejected men whose entry physical exams showed that they had venereal disease—but because the rates were so high, it had to give up on that policy and instead, with the help of new medications, hospitalized and cured them. Army doctors treated the situation as a public health problem, not a morality crusade, and most soldiers cooperated in trying to identify the woman from whom they caught their infection. Again, the object was not arrest as it had been in World War I, but instead, to also treat the woman and thus stop the chain of infection.

The military considered itself successful if "the open practice of prostitution" was "curtailed," as sociologist Walter Reckless reported in 1943, because "it is unreasonable to assume that no prostitution is available." Especially in Hawaii, where millions of men passed through on their way to the Pacific, law enforcement, including the military police, came very close to condoning and even regulating supposedly illegal prostitution. Author Emily Yellin found that "about 250,000 men visited the Hotel Street brothels each month, paying \$3 for three minutes with a woman ... For some of the younger men ... it was their first sexual experience. For some men who would ... die in combat, it would be their last."

Many of these sex workers went to Hawaii from San Francisco in a well-organized system that included registering with the local police. Hawaii had a 9:00 p.m. curfew after the Pearl Harbor attack, and, because of that, they openly practiced their hurried, highly-structured business during the day. "Men often could be seen lined up around the block," Yellin said, and neither the military nor civilian police took any notice. The same near-professionalization of prostitution also occurred in Seattle, Washington. A longtime practitioner there told Reckless that she appreciated the military's unstated but real policy: it eliminated her competition, brought a better class of clients, and she was living very comfortably:

The war and its increase in men brought many new girls to Seattle, but the recent crack-down has forced most of these new ones out of town. The older houses are still running wide open and doing a fine trade. The main difference is that where the girls used to leave Seattle when a large conference or other meeting of men took place in California, now there is plenty of trade here.

The novices to whom she referred came to be known as "Victory Girls." Some, perhaps most, were not professional prostitutes motivated by money, and few had any connections to pimps or brothels. They were not hardened women in the business of sex, but instead simply had unconventional standards of morality. Most seemed to see sleeping with soldiers as a sort of patriotism, going just a step beyond volunteering as a dance partner at the USO. They frequented pool halls,

bowling alleys, and other places where soldiers gathered and made themselves available—and not surprisingly many men rewarded them with the emotional approval that they probably sought. Except for drinks and dinner and perhaps the occasional gift, money typically was not a factor. Neither partner expected a long-term relationship, but instead just a brief fling before the soldier shipped out.

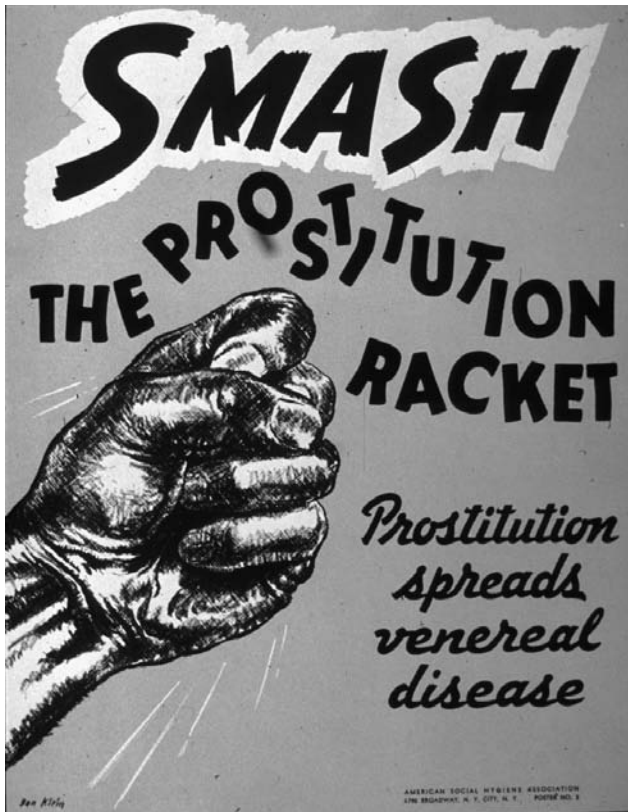
Some Victory Girls, however, broke the hearts of unsophisticated young men who thought the faux feeling was genuine, who hoped to marry and carry the woman's memory with him to battle. Grace Porter Miller was by no means a Victory Girl, but a former teacher who enlisted in the military and was assigned to San Francisco, where many an innocent farm boy faced the ship that might carry him to death. Her memoir tells of several young men whose names she barely knew, but who revealed themselves to be deeply in love and pleaded for a hasty wedding. There was, in fact, little realistic chance that a young man would meet a suitable young woman in such places. One soldier who had turned from naive to cynical summarized for *New Republic*: "there's only two kinds of girls in Armytown..., soldiers' wives or anybody's gals."

Presumably because everyone wanted to wear a uniform during the war, some "anybody's gals" expressed their patriotism by creating costumes that resembled those of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC). This happened often enough that it was a factor in the 1943 "slander campaign" against the new corps. Official historian Mattie Treadwell wrote:

The streetwalkers, known as Victory Girls, were discovered in Harrisburg [PA], New Port News [VA], Baltimore, and other cities wearing uniforms ... very similar to the WAAC's ... At the Hampton Roads [VA] Port of Embarkation..., they were so bold as to wait outside the gate, claiming that they were Waacs and picking up soldiers as they left the port.

Treadwell was especially outraged that native women in North Africa managed to get parts of WAAC uniforms from the Quartermaster Corps and not only practiced prostitution, but did so while committing the cardinal military sin of being "out of uniform"—wearing, for example, bobby sox with khaki skirts. As the combat moved on into the European and Pacific Theaters of Operations, relationships often changed from consensual and paid sex to forced prostitution and rape. Although American officials did all they could to prevent the latter, other nations did not. Nazis frequently forced themselves on women in the European nations they conquered, while Japan openly created brothels for its soldiers, especially forcing Koreans to become "comfort women." Russia did not run brothels, but its officials failed to discipline its soldiers when large numbers of them gang raped women in occupied Germany.

Most Americans were unaware of overseas conditions and, of course, paid more attention to prostitution in the United States. Especially the first women to take jobs in traditionally male occupations were accused of doing so to further their "real business." For example, because so many men were drafted and because the war caused so much more travel,



Posters such as this were placed in men's restrooms. The aim was not morality, but prevention of venereal disease. *Courtesy of National Archives*

there was a genuine shortage of cab drivers—but the first women who applied for these jobs found it difficult to get union membership cards because male union leaders were convinced they wanted the cabs to sell sex. *Business Week*, which rarely supported labor unions, was willing to believe them about this. In addition to cab drivers, it went on to repeat rumors about prostitutes in the shipbuilding industry:

The AFL unions in the Portland [Oregon] shipyards are trying to screen the prostitutes from their membership rolls. Fifty women lost their union work permits because they were discovered plying their trade in the holds of new Liberty ships; others because, with date books in hand, they spent their working hours in the shops soliciting patrons for their leisure hours. A collateral fear is that the prostitutes may consort with negroes, who then might try to take liberties with other white women—and this might lead to serious race complications.

While such spokesmen spun their fantasies, the reality was that men in defense plants were much more likely to sexually harass women than vice versa. Management certainly believed that male sexual harassment of females was routine; as one male executive excused it to *Time*: “you know how men are.” The usual solution was to segregate women on the job—which also made it conveniently easier to pay them lower wages.

Indeed, that very division of men and women into “separate spheres” was at the base of many problems, including

prostitution. Most men who paid for sex did so because they did not know women well enough to feel comfortable around them. By working together in the military, in defense plants, and in all sorts of volunteer and recreational activities, women and men got to know each other better during the war. In countless romances fired by life-threatening circumstances, women began to recognize their own sexuality; men began to see that the lines between “nice girls” and “Victory Girls” and prostitutes had many gradations. All of that, plus effective birth control in the 1960s, would mean a steady decline of the most ancient profession in the United States. Instead, the big money in the modern sex trade has moved to nations where female inferiority remains unchallenged.

*See also:* birth control/birth rate; camp followers; courtship; defense industries; draft; marriage; posters; pregnancy; North Africa; occupied Germany; Quartermaster Corps; pay; recreation; shipbuilding; travel; uniforms; unions; venereal disease; sexual harassment; “slander campaign”; volunteers; wives of servicemen; Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps

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## PSYCHOLOGISTS

Psychology had barely moved out of its infancy by World War II. Sigmund Freud, the father of the field, did not die until 1939, the same year that war was declared in Europe. The American Psychological Association (APA), an outgrowth of the American Philosophical Association, was less than fifty years old. More than in other academic fields, women



were part of psychology from its beginning: pioneer dream researcher Mary Calkins, for instance, was one of just three people to be president of both national philosophical and psychological organizations; the others were William James and John Dewey.

Women definitely regressed during the Great Depression of the 1930s, especially in the college professorships that still dominated psychology, but World War II meant huge steps forward for both female psychologists and for the profession. The field also moved from Europe to America, as founders were displaced when fascism and war devastated their nations. This was true of Austria, home to Freudian psychology; France, where Binet developed mental testing; Russia, with its Pavlovian behaviorism; and Germany, where gestalt theory originated. American “functionalism,” or pragmatism, increasingly would replace the past academic orientation with applied, or clinical, psychology.

Hitler helped by terrorizing psychologists in the 1930s. Like scientists in other fields, Americans worked to get their European colleagues out of Nazi territory, and the APA’s Committee on Displaced Foreign Psychologists, in fact, was chaired by Barbara Banks. Among the most prominent women who fled to the United States were Helene Deutsch, founder of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Institute, as well as Charlotte Buhler, Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, Herta Herzog, and Marie Jahoda. Psychoanalyst Karen Horney was particularly important for feminists; she challenged Freudian orthodoxy in *Psychology of Women* (1944). Most were Jewish and all were refugees, which made them especially able to identify with the psychological problems of displaced persons in the postwar era.

Because the military has more money than academia, the war also subsidized some fundamentals of modern psychology. Intelligence testing of soldiers had begun in World War I, and World War II, with its much greater numbers and much more complex organization, was a tremendous boon for psychological testing. The WAVES, Women’s Army Corps (WAC), and other new female military units were especially enthusiastic users of aptitude tests. Because they could not draft and depended on recruiting volunteers, the women’s units had to try harder than male corps to match a recruit’s abilities to her military occupational speciality. Aptitude tests were ideal for that purpose. They also had a positive effect for African-American women, as some minority recruits were able to demonstrate their potential with indisputable scores.

In addition to the emigres and the development of mental testing, a third factor in moving the field forward was that war—and the War Department’s money—encouraged the men who dominated academia to follow women into applied psychology. Authors Albert and Carol Gilgen quote two modern psychologists on this, Eleanor J. Gibson and Ellen Herman. Gibson said:

The war came just at the height of the “Grand Learning Theory” era. Older [male] psychologists ... stayed home, of course, and continued their writing. But research was

interrupted and history was changed. The “Golden Age” of learning theory never quite came back.

Speaking of the war, Herman added:

No event illustrates better how military conflict offered psychologists unprecedented opportunities to demonstrate the practical worth of their social theories, human sciences, and behavioral technologies in making and shaping public policy.

Indeed, once the public discovered that social scientists were willing to get out of their laboratories and classrooms to deal with the genuine needs of millions of war-traumatized people, Americans were glad to support psychologists. Because women have dealt with the realities of children, food, and other essential nurturing since prehistoric times, it is not surprising that women became leaders in the applied psychology so desperately needed because of the war’s worldwide insanity. Ultimately, that would have great effect, but, at the war’s beginning, men still held the top APA positions. Impatient with that, Ruth Tolman and others organized an APA Subcommittee on the Services of Women in the [War] Emergency. They did this in November, 1941; by 1943, men had become sufficiently enlightened that the subcommittee merged into the APA’s major committee on the war.

Because of the same inattention from the APA’s male leadership, the National Congress of Women Psychologists organized in New York a week after Pearl Harbor. With some fifty founders, it soon grew to more than two hundred. It initially was intended as a “for the duration” organization, but became permanent in 1947 as the International Council of Psychologists. Including “international” in its name demonstrated that these women saw the global postwar need for mental health, something that also was being introduced by women active in the new United Nations and its humanitarian arm, UNESCO.

Industrial psychology made especially huge strides during the war because employers had to find new ways to motivate essential new workers. During the Great Depression, few managers cared about worker satisfaction: jobs were so scarce that almost no one quit, no matter how unhappy they might be with working conditions. That quickly reversed with the war, and countless companies hired female psychologists to help them understand how to recruit and retain female employees. Such employment opportunity for psychologists was apparent already in the war’s first year, when *Independent Woman* said that “the entire graduating class in psychiatric social work at Smith College,” a women-only institution, “had jobs many months before they finished school.”

The same was true in educational psychology. According to the Gilgens, a 1946 study concluded that “women held about 60 percent of the psychologists’ positions in educational systems, clinics, guidance centers, hospitals, [and] custodial institutions.” To be sure, they also cite the fact that “only 33 of the 1,006 psychologists in the Army and Navy were women.” Viewed in a numerical perspective, however, female psychologists actually were doing rather well, given

that there were fewer than a quarter-million women in the military, compared with upwards of fifteen million men. The WAC certainly utilized all the psychologists it could. Moreover, its official historian, Mattie Treadwell, indicated that Dr. Margaret Craighill, director of the WAC's medical services, was not the least timid about addressing what she saw as inadequacies on the part of psychologists.

When William Menninger became head of the Surgeon General's Neuropsychiatric Division in 1944, Craighill sent a memo saying she had "raised quite a little hell about the fact that psychiatrists in the field who were supposed to examine WACs didn't know" how to do their job well. The specific problem was in recruiting, where women with mental problems that Craighill thought should have been detectable nonetheless were enlisted. Saying that 80 percent of WAC discharges were due to "neuropsychiatric reasons," her concluding line to Menninger was, "Let's get going."

Probably more than any other factor, though, American acceptance of what had been seen as European theory was because the war made it so very clear that people needed help. Especially wives and mothers of veterans were desperate for experts to tell them what to do about husbands and sons who refused to eat because they had seen starvation. Millions of men woke up screaming from nightmares known only to the woman who slept with them, and almost none of those women had any idea how to make the dreams disappear. Veterans who were physically, not mentally, disabled by the war needed assistance from occupational therapists.

Those profound problems, however, were much less likely to be addressed than issues relating to courtship, marriage, and especially children. Dr. Margaret MacDonald, who headed psychiatric services for the federal Children's Bureau, took the lead on worries about the effect of war on children. Servicemen's wives were apt to get contradictory and confused advice for their problems, and, near the end of the war, the effect of anxiety-ridden years on these still-young women was apparent. In January 1945, *Time* reported that in San Francisco alone, where sailors' wives often waited, twenty-five hundred had undergone psychiatric treatment in the past eighteen months:

Women are paying the same war penalties as men..., many of whom crack up long before they reach combat. Women who have followed their husbands to embarkation ports often find themselves spiritually stranded ... Particularly those recently married or childless develop physiological disturbances, resentment..., inability to recall the husband's face.

Other questions were even harder, and, sadly, it was magazines with less educated audiences that were the main source of helpful, practical information. Among the most sensitive were *Ladies Home Journal's* "Meet Ed Savickas, a Victim of Combat Fatigue," as well as *McCall's* "If Your Man is an NP" [neuropsychiatric] and "Those Who Did Not Die." The authors probably were not well-credentialed psychologists, but they nonetheless responded to genuine need. Toni Taylor, who wrote the NP piece, may have done

the best job of explicating the big picture. In mid-1944, well before victory was assured, she helped women face the reality that might be theirs for the rest of their lives. Readers must understand, she said:

There is neither time nor personnel available to give each man the psychiatric help he needs ... Also, there are wide areas of our country in which no psychiatric clinics are available and in which psychiatry itself is regarded with fear and suspicion ... In spite of whatever good we can accomplish we have to face the fact that some—perhaps many—psychoneurotic casualties won't be reclaimed. Many need continued psychiatric help, which they won't get.

Hers was a harsh analysis, but largely true. Speaking out was an important first step to validating the world's need for more and better mental-health healers.

**See also:** African-American women; children; colleges; courtship; draft; employers/employment changes; magazines; marriage; military occupational speciality; Pearl Harbor; postwar; recruitment; scientific research and development; United Nations; veterans; WAVES; wives of servicemen; Women's Army Corps

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## QUARTERMASTER CORPS

“Quartermaster” is the Army’s ancient term for “supply.” In colonial times, the “Quartermaster General” was literally the “master” of the “quarters” where soldiers lived and was responsible for everything that they (and their horses) needed. One cause of the Revolutionary War, of course, was the quartering of British troops in American homes. The empire saved the money that otherwise would have to be expended on building barracks, buying and cooking food, etc. Instead, colonial housewives were expected to provide beds, meals, and laundry for men assigned to their homes as “quarters.” The natural result was sexual harassment and disruption of family life to the point that the new Bill of Rights specifically forbade the U.S. government from doing this.

The methodology changed, but the mission of the Quartermaster Corps remained the same in World War II. It was the branch that thoroughly understood the old adage of “for want of a nail”—that a horse would lose its shoe if it lacked a crucial nail and that a subsequent chain of misfortunes would follow until a battle and finally a war was lost because of the link of little things. Tens of thousands of little things followed: from the shoelaces on combat boots to the helmet that also served as a bowl, everything a soldier wore was carefully planned and sized for greatest efficiency. From housing to clothing to food, and from movie projectors in classrooms to pool tables in recreation rooms and even to registering the graves of dead, the corps covered manifold needs.

One might expect that this mission would be seen as a natural for women in the military, but the corps was not excited about the new Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC). According to memos collected by WAAC historian Mattie Treadwell, leaders had objections: “it was not advisable to use Waacs in grave registration” and “it was decided

that bread-baking was definitely a man’s assignment because of the strength required.” Even laundry work was not acceptable because it usually was done under contract with private companies, and it would not do “to mix Waacs and civilians because of the difference in pay and privileges.” Fortunately, most of these jobs were not why women joined the military in the first place, and the corps’ underutilization of women’s abilities arguably benefited women by sending them into a less menial military occupational speciality (MOS).

As with men, the Quartermaster also was responsible for women’s uniforms. Male soldiers also experienced wool-in-the-tropics fiascos, but female soldiers’ problems with the corps seemed to show an almost deliberate defiance of the reality of women’s bodies. Margaret Flint, for instance, was a WAAC photographer who “rode an Army bicycle, not designed for a lady, and starting off thereon involves a series of contortions. There’s the short, narrow skirt ... there’s the bag of bulbs, film, etc., and the white bag with the camera gun and extension. I have no basket yet.” Countless women echoed her complaints about the lack of pragmatism. Perhaps the best example of corps rigidity was when, after a long delay, WAACs at Fort Des Moines finally got their bathrobes—all size 18.

When WAACs first went to the European Theater of Operations, the corps cut many items of apparel, especially underwear, and again demonstrated a lack of imagination and flexibility. “The theater,” Treadwell wrote, “cabled to the Quartermaster General to point out that, while in the United States it might be acceptable to call these items non-essential and require a woman to buy her own, such procedure was inappropriate in an overseas area ... The Quartermaster General refused to resume issue of these items, but eventually arranged for their ... sale through post exchanges.” Among





As part of her assignment to the Quartermaster Corps, WAC Lillian Jones sorts shoes in France, 1945. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

these “non-essential” items were sanitary napkins or any other method of dealing with menstruation.

Army women in the South Pacific experienced even more serious problems because of supply. It was the only place in the whole world where, according to historian Kathleen Boom, “the medical evacuation rate [was] higher for Wacs than for non-combat men.” Studies confirmed that this illness rate was largely because of “deficiencies in uniforms and supplies.” The risk of malaria was so great that women were required to wear trousers, but the first to arrive were issued one pair—made of wool that caused dermatitis. Treadwell added that “there were no overshoes for women,” and their feet developed “jungle rot” because of shoes that “never dried out.”

Quartermaster leadership also missed the point on food: at the initial WAAC installation, Fort Des Moines, the menu was too light and ladylike to provide the calories needed, but at military messes in other places, women “wanted less potatoes, bread, flour, lard ... and more fresh vegetables and salads” than was routine for men. By 1944, the corps had adjusted, and Treadwell cited a corps’ study that showed it cost the Army \$0.58 to feed a man for a day, compared with \$0.52 per woman—a difference of more than \$2 million per year.

The corps’ major training school was at Fort Lee, Virginia, and as with black men, a disproportionate number of black women ended up with occupational specialties that fell under the Quartermaster Corps. Some black female officers taught courses at Fort Lee, and although they only taught other African Americans, this experience often had more connection to postwar careers than many other military specialties.

Most significant, the corps directly or indirectly employed many more civilian than military women. Hundreds of thousands of women worked in just the one category of sewing uniforms in their multiple varieties. Hundreds of thousands

of women processed the paperwork for the corps’ innumerable purchases, which included everything from apples to zippers. Other civilian women, often African Americans, worked in warehouses and depots from which supplies were shipped—often climbing high stacks and handling heavy boxes. Because these jobs were with private contractors, the corps’ leadership excused itself from considering objections that this work might be too strenuous for women. In one way or another, literally millions of women worked under the aegis of the Quartermaster General, and their productively contributed greatly to victory.

*See also:* **African-American women; food shortages; Des Moines, Fort; dress; European Theater of Operations; military occupational specialties; Pacific Theater of Operations; recreation; underutilization; uniforms; Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps**

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## RADIO

Wireless telephones were not yet imagined during World War II, and most military communication took place on radio waves. The relatively few telephone lines in the European Theater of Operations (ETO) often were destroyed in battle, and, in most of the Pacific Theater of Operations (PTO), no phone lines ever had been installed. Thus communications between headquarters and battlefields used radios, much like the citizens band radio communication that was popular in the 1970s. Members of the Women's Army Corps, who were assigned to the Army Signal Corps, operated these radios at headquarters, especially ETO and the North African front. Like early cell phones, the sound from such radios often was filled with static—but much more difficult was the fact that messages were encrypted to frustrate enemy eavesdropping and had to be decoded by cryptographers. Although women in the naval branches were not allowed to go overseas, they also assigned women as “radiomen.”

Most people both then and now, however, think of “radio” as broadcast radio, unconcerned with secret military messages or other private communication. The world's first radio station was KDKA in Pittsburgh, which went on the air in 1920, and, at lightening speed, radio became an important part of the Roaring Twenties. It had a tremendous effect on women's lives, as it enabled isolated housewives to keep up with modern music and information. Women were the target of “soap operas,” called that because radio offered a new medium for advertising soaps and other products that women buy. Early radio was live, and stations competed to feature women in entertainment roles from drama to comedy. The phenomenon provided employment to thousands of women whose communities could not support live theater; they read

their roles in front of studio microphones. Advertising paid their salaries, often directly, as one business “sponsored” a show. Music also often was live, and women were more likely than not to be the organists who introduced almost every segment of the broadcast day.

Women were largely limited to the entertainment end of radio, however, with news reporting reserved for men: somehow, the same feminine voices that were pleasant with singing and acting commonly were considered “too shrill” for news. As experienced men went off to war, however, some women broke into new radio roles. Sylvia Rebarber Leff, who had acting experience on radio in New York, followed her drafted husband to training in North Carolina, where a Fayetteville station hired her. She told oral historians Nancy Baker Wise and Christy Wise:

To their amazement, none of the listeners objected to hearing a woman's voice on the air. It turned out to be a fascinating job, but my background had not completely prepared me. For one thing, announcers at small stations also were engineers in those days. This station had two network affiliations—the Mutual Broadcasting System and the Tobacco Network—and it carried programs from both. The announcer had to patch in all the shows that came on his shift.

Today, it takes six months to a year of formal training to get a basic engineering license. But when I reported for work at 11:00 on a Monday morning, the engineer showed me around for an hour and then said, “I'm going to lunch—it's all yours!” ... I managed not to blow up the place, and by the end of the week, I was quite adept at cueing up records while reading commercials or the news ... Plus the organist and I did a weekly “Words and Music” show..., a remote broadcast from the chapel of a funeral home.

Women also broadcast overseas. Indeed, in 1928, Irene Kuhn had been the first person, not merely the first woman, to broadcast news from China—a mere eight years after KDKA. She was such a pioneer that she did not know whether anyone would hear her, but she continued in the profession, and in World War II, again aired the news from China. Such women were more common in the ETO, where the support mechanisms for broadcasting were more developed. Famed CBS correspondent Edward R. Morrow hired Mary Marvin Breckinridge to broadcast from London before the United States entered the war; NBC responded with Helen Hiatt, who was one of the last to air radio news from the Continent before France fell.

Betty Wason of CBS Radio was another early reporter in Europe. She covered the Soviet invasion of Finland in 1940 and Germany's 1941 invasion of Norway. From Scandinavia, she went to southeastern Europe, where Greece, Albania, and other nations were ostensibly under fascist control, but individual loyalties were less than strong and it was difficult to know who was trustworthy. Reporters could get news there, but never without risk. The same was true for listeners, as many civilians in Nazi-occupied countries were executed for the crime of listening to non-Nazi radio broadcasts. News there was completely controlled, of course, and the Gestapo frequently confiscated radios in such areas. Simply having one invited arrest.

Soldiers also listened to the radio, and both sides used it for propaganda. Although Allied broadcasters were much freer, reporters in war theaters also submitted news scripts to military censors, who delayed information that might be helpful to the enemy. Both sides also used female voices to demoralize men and persuade them to desert their armies, with "Tokyo Rose" and "Axis Sally" the most infamous of these women. When soldiers heard them, though, they had turned the dial away from Armed Forces Radio, which began broadcasting in May 1942. It produced original programs such as *Mail Call* and *GI Journal* aimed specifically at soldiers, as well broadcasting current music and commentary, often with female disc jockeys. Kristine Konold's memoirs tell of her experience with radio in Germany.

The Office of War Information (OWI) also produced shows such as the weekly series "*You Can't Do Business With Hitler*." It was the source of countless pro-American press releases, as OWI women essentially functioned as news writers for radio announcers both aboard and at home. It and other government agencies conducted endless publicity campaigns on the air, promoting everything from war bond sales to conservation of scarce materials to recruitment of women for defense industry jobs. Commercial radio itself accepted much more of the role now assigned to public broadcasting, and NBC even ran a "University of the Air."

Most public service announcements were delivered without charge to government in exchange for station licenses, but some paid commercials from private companies also promoted war efforts. For example, because rationing meant

that grocers could not sell as many canned goods as customers wanted to buy, stores featured that explanation in their radio ads. It maintained businesses' name recognition, while also offering important information to customers. Especially in areas where literacy rates were low, radio was fundamental to explaining the complex effect of war on daily life.

Radio networks also supported the war with features such as that on Christmas 1943, when NBC Radio arranged and broadcasted a worldwide phone call with a Missouri family that had ten children in the armed forces. The youngest was Private Helen Van Coutren, then stationed at the School of Army Administration in Conway, Arkansas. Three of the sisters were in the WAC (Women's Army Corps), with Adine serving in North Africa and Rita in Washington, D.C. One brother was in the Army, while the other six joined the Navy; they were stationed from Iceland to the South Pacific. Uncommonly, their mother, Emma Van Coutren lived and worked in New York, and only the father remained in St. Louis.

Although people cared very much about war news, many listeners turned on the radio primarily for entertainment and escape from daily stress. Television was largely unknown during the war years, and radio provided a multitude of popular shows. Nationally broadcast hits ranged from comedies to mysteries to westerns. Women's roles were limited in the latter, with Dale Evans as the most positive model for girls. She kept the stage name that she had developed as a singer when she married "The Singing Cowboy," Roy Rogers. By their very nature, of course, westerns lacked any reference to the war, although advertising associated with them often did.

"Nick and Nora Charles" were the most sophisticated of the era's mystery detectives, but most such shows were more nearly "true crime." Relatively few plots mentioned the war—but many stories were much more violent than might be expected. Both lawbreakers and law enforcers used language that was crude, albeit not profane, and such shows often displayed a casual attitude towards killing. Although women sometimes were portrayed as more sensitive than men, many "molls" were as evil as their men. Few parenting books or magazines spoke to this: although countless articles were written about the effect of war on children, seldom was there any mention of the civilian crime and violence that children regularly heard on radio.

Women seldom were the stars of such shows, however, and were much more likely to be featured in comedies or "soaps." The era's most popular daytime dramas probably were *Ma Perkins*, *Young Widder Brown*, and *The Guiding Light*, which still is extant on television. *Joyce Jordan, MD* lasted for almost two decades, from 1938 to 1956, and *Portia Faces Life* endured for a similar time. Although the majority of soaps continued to feature traditional gender roles, these provided some exceptions. Soaps did not run in the evening, when *Our Miss Brooks* drew huge audiences for the clever high school teacher surrounded by clueless colleagues. *Fibber McGee and Molly* was a similar comedy, with a cynical Molly wise to Fibber's endless schemes. Other



popular shows featuring women were *Meet Millie* and *Ethel and Albert*, as well as adaptations of print comics such as *Blondie* and *Little Orphan Annie*.

African-American Hattie McDaniel starred in “Beulah,” a character beloved by both whites and blacks. She earned a substantial \$2,000 a week—while refusing to use stereotyped dialect, insisting on a contract that allowed her to change any script she found distasteful, and heading the Hollywood Victory Committee’s work with black soldiers. Other women in broadcasting also provided volunteer entertainment, especially with the USO. Although the nation did not yet have PBS (Public Broadcasting System) or any other non-commercial radio comparable to BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation), other entities offered programming on serious public policy. The Women Directors of the National Association of Broadcasters, for example, ran a three-month series on the beginnings of the United Nations in 1943. This and similar projects usually were volunteer efforts, accomplished outside of one’s regular job.

“Talk shows” aimed at women began in the prewar years, especially in the Midwest. Iowa’s Leanna Driftmier began a half-hour show in 1939, and according to historian Lisa Ossian, it became “the longest running homemaker program in the history of radio.” Called *Kitchen-Klatter*, Driftmier supported the war with information on conservation and food needs: “I’m sure all *Kitchen-Klatter* mothers are doing what they can on the home front.” Missouri’s Mary Margaret McBride arguably pioneered the concept nationally in 1940. She introduced topics beyond domesticity and soon became so popular that advertisers pleaded to sponsor her. Tremendously successful comedian Gracie Allen also was closely identified with her commercial sponsors; with her husband and acting partner, George Burns, she frequently worked advertising directly into the script.

Whether through advertising, news, or entertainment, radio both reflected and influenced the war. Radio was the way in which most Americans learned about Pearl Harbor, and countless women both at home and wrote in their diaries, letters, or memoirs about hearing the news of President Roosevelt’s death or other significant events on the radio. Most households just had one radio in this era, usually built cabinet style so that it stood a yard or so above the floor, and families grouped around it in the evenings much like television today. The radio was a terribly important aspect of life, but when factories converted to making military-type radios, production of new ones ended. Young women setting up new households searched desperately for a used radio: it was the electrical appliance that itinerant wives of servicemen most needed—life was simply too lonely without a radio.

*See also:* **advertising; Axis Sally; bond sales; Breckinridge, Mary Marvin; censorship; childhood; conservation; correspondents; cryptography; European Theater of Operations; Hiatt, Helen; Kuhn, Irene; North Africa; magazines; music; Office of War Information; Pacific Theater of Operations; Pearl Harbor; recruitment; Tokyo**

**Rose; United Nations; USO; volunteers; wives of servicemen; Women’s Army Corps**

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## RANK, MILITARY

From the beginning, women in the military could expect lower rank than they merited in comparison with similarly credentialed men. The oldest female unit, the Army Nurse Corps (ANC), began in 1901 and accepted secondary status in rank for the next seven decades. Both Julia Flikke, who was ANC chief when the war began, and her 1943 replacement, Florence Blanchfield, were colonels—a rank given to men who sometimes command fewer than five hundred troops, while these women led some sixty thousand nurses stationed all over the world. Blanchfield’s case particularly points out the unfairness. She was second in command to Flikke, but severely under-ranked as a mere captain—and when Flikke retired, Blanchfield went from captain to colonel, skipping

the rank of major altogether, because the head of a corps had to be at least a colonel. “Relative rank” was the official term for this systematic discrimination against women, which was echoed in pay. All nurses were officers, but ANC pay levels actually were one grade less than that of the rank they ostensibly held: i.e., a nurse who was a captain was paid at the same level as a male first lieutenant.

The Navy Nurse Corps (NNC), founded in 1908, also was unfair, although less so than the ANC. Sue Dauser, its head throughout the war, was promoted to captain late in 1942 and held that rank until retirement; she was in charge of some fourteen thousand women everywhere on the globe. The rank of captain in the Navy usually means command of a ship, with fewer sailors aboard and all of them in one place. Admiral was the rank that Dauser arguably deserved—and when the Navy finally promoted its first woman to that rank in 1972, the corps was much smaller than it had been under Dauser. NNC rank was more equitable than the ANC, however, because it was smaller, and its administration therefore less difficult. Like the ANC, all NNC women were officers, but beyond that, even those at the lowest officer ranks enjoyed better working conditions because they directly supervised male medics who did the menial tasks. In contrast, virtually all wartime ANC members were second lieutenants who not only stayed at that rank for years, but also routinely performed chores that Navy nurses assigned to enlisted men.

Until 1942, there were no other corps open to women, and when the Women’s Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC) and others began, Congress and the War Department continued to hold a firm lid on female rank. Oveta Culp Hobby, who exhausted herself in the creation of the 100,000-member corps for the Army, initially had no rank at all. Although she wore a uniform, she was called “director” and paid at the rate of a major until 1943. When Congress removed the WAAC’s auxiliary status and it became the Women’s Army Corps (WAC), Hobby finally was granted the (still inadequate) rank of colonel. Congress, in fact, inserted into the corps’ authorizing legislation a clause stating that the top rank of general would not be open to women. As Hobby demonstrated her excellent executive abilities, some congressmen—but not, notably, congresswomen—talked of removing the clause. The *Congressional Record* shows the outrage of Louisiana Representative Overton Brooks:

In no other branch of the service does an officer holding the rank of colonel command so many troops. Under the Tables of Organization of the Army, a brigadier general is supposed to command ... 10,000 troops. In the Wacs, a colonel commands ten times this number. This is not fair ... Colonel Hobby is entitled to the rank of major general.

He made his speech on July 11, 1945, however, when Hobby was on the point of retirement, and his colleagues ignored the issue. No woman would be promoted to brigadier general until 1970, when the commanders of the Army Nurse Corps and the Women’s Army Corps were awarded that rank at the same ceremony. Not until 1978 would a woman obtain

the two-star rank of major general, the level that Brooks deemed appropriate for Hobby according to the Army’s own definition. And that, of course, makes no acknowledgment of the exceptional skill that it took to create a corps from scratch, especially a controversial one.

Mildred McAfee, who led the Navy’s new WAVES, never rose above captain. Although a captain in the Navy is a much higher rank than in the Army, she arguably should have had the highest rank of admiral. Her WAVES reached approximately one hundred thousand members, which, had she been male, would have merited that rank. McAfee was less discriminated against than Hobby, however, and that also was true for the women who headed the other naval branches. Ruth Cheney Streeter of the Women Marines began as a major and ended as a colonel, but had only about twenty thousand under her command—five times fewer than Hobby. Dorothy Stratton of the Coast Guard’s SPARS was the best treated: she led about eleven thousand and yet was a captain, the same rank held by McAfee, who had ten times as many WAVES. Internationally famed pilot Jacqueline Cochran represents the clearest case of gender bias. She headed the Women’s Airforce Service Pilots (WASP)—which suffered many more fatalities than any other comparable group—but never held any rank. Like Hobby’s initial title, Cochran was called “director” for the duration of the WASP. The overall point is that while there were rigid rules for promoting male officers, rank for women was nearly random.

To a fairly large extent, this was because the congresswomen who sponsored authorizing legislation, Edith Nourse Rogers for the Army and Margaret Chase Smith for the Navy, were so eager to establish the corps that they did not quibble over details. The legislation that created the WAVES, for example, limited it to just one woman at the rank of lieutenant commander (the Army’s equivalent of major) and thirty-five at lieutenant (Army captain). Of the rest of WAVES officer ranks, only 35 percent could be lieutenant, junior grade (an Army first lieutenant)—which meant that 65 percent of women were effectively held at the lowest officer rank, ensign (second lieutenant in the Army).

Because of such limiting quotas, women’s units arguably lacked the broad middle—where the backbone of the male military is—and instead had a tiny top and a big bottom. Two examples make the point of how unrewarded real leadership was: when nurses were trapped on Corregidor early in the war, their top commander was a mere Army captain, even though she had been in the ANC since World War I. Later, when Army nurses crashed in enemy territory in Albania, the highest-ranking woman was First Lieutenant Agnes Jensen; the twelve women with her were second lieutenants. The War Department effectively enforced a democracy among women, while retaining hierarchy for men.

Many men also were under-ranked in comparison with their credentials, but it is more striking in the case of women because quotas on rank contradicted the need for voluntary recruitment: women were not subject to the draft, and the improbability of promotion opportunity worked as

a disincentive. Largely because of patriotism, many women joined anyway and served as enlisted personnel instead of the officer status they should have merited. Perhaps the most egregious case of those cited by military historian Mattie Treadwell was a WAC who directed Yale University's neuropathy lab before enlisting—and remained a private first class. Such lowly ranks not only were unjust, but inevitably meant underutilization of knowledge.

Some corps—but no women's corps—could grant “direct commissions” that lifted one from enlisted to officer status without going through officer training. Although rare, it was possible for women, like men, to receive these. This especially happened in the European Theater of Operations (ETO), where several male commanders requested such promotional leaps for their WAC secretaries. Hobby objected and none were granted for secretaries, but the review resulted in some direct commissions for technicians who clearly were under-ranked compared with their duties. Treadwell's most notable case probably was that of a “WAC sergeant, who, as an expert on bridge demolition, was already filling the job of a major in the Corps of Engineers.” The most publicly noted of such direct commissions, however, was that of Kay Summersby, chauffeur to top commander Dwight D. Eisenhower. Rumors of their romance floated for years—and the issue is directly connected to rank because enlisted personnel could not socialize with officers. Socialization, in fact, was *the* major rank-related issue of the war—not pay or promotion or utilization, but instead who could date whom.

This had not been a prewar problem because all military nurses were officers, and because there also were many eligible male officers, most nurses had no problem restricting their socializing to them. There simply were no non-officer, enlisted women in the prewar military, and enlisted men socialized with each other and with civilian women. When millions of enlisted men entered the military—many of whom were better educated and more sophisticated than longtime officers—some democratization between ranks was inevitable.

Beyond that, many of those who joined the military, both women and men, had no idea of the traditional chasm between officers and enlisted personnel—and their first boot camp bosses were likely to be sergeants, or non-commissioned officers (NCOs), which added further confusion. Privates, both male and female, did not understand why they couldn't go to the NCO Club, nor was every male lieutenant happy with the idea that he could not ask a female corporal for a date. All of this was new to the military, too, which depended on rank as essential to training soldiers to accept commands that might be a matter of life or death. That sort of instantaneous obedience would be unlikely if the private and the captain had shared a beer the night before, and so military socialization was segregated into the three categories of enlisted men, NCOs, and officers—with women limited to the role of guest.

Nor were explanations of these off-duty rules adequately addressed in training, and both men and women new to the

military violated them without realizing that they were committing an offense. One general, for example, was mystified as to why his excellent WAC secretary left as soon as she was eligible for discharge: it turned out that she had been irrevocably angered when military police (MP) arrested her for eating out with her officer *husband*. Had she worn civilian clothes, the incident would not have occurred—but such rules caused countless headaches for administrative officers.

At the beginning, civilians—even feminist civilians—were akin to the military in their inability to separate theory from the reality of daily life. A few months after the WAAC began, *Independent Woman* approved of rank limitations: “Imagine what it would do to discipline to have husband or wife outranking each other!” Less than a year later, however, the public mood had shifted enough that mainstream magazine *Collier's* reported the Navy recently “repealed the pointless regulation which forbade the ‘social mingling of Wave enlisted personnel and naval officers.’”

That settled the issue for Navy women, all of whom served statewide, but Army women continued to be troubled by decisions of commanders in overseas theaters—some of which contradicted revised War Department policy. Because so many American women were assigned to London and later, to Paris, the greatest problems were there. Some MPs seemed to take delight in breaking up dates that their fellow males had been lucky enough to get, and the victims started sending letters to the Army's daily newspaper, *Stars and Stripes*. The issue finally came to the attention of top commander Eisenhower when he read letters from Army nurses who wanted to date “good respectable privates,” instead of officers who were more likely to be “married men.” According to Treadwell, his response was: “What is all this?” When he realized that his own ETO “had a written restriction against social mixing,” he issued a memo:

I want good sense to govern such things. Social contact between sexes on a basis that does not interfere with other officers or enlisted persons should have the rule of decency and deportment—not artificial barriers.

The memo was in May of 1945, however, when the war was virtually over. It would take still more decades to settle issues of rank within the professional military—but in 2008, when the Army promoted the first woman to the rank of lieutenant (four-star) general, Ann Dunwoody's husband, a retired Air Force colonel, sat in the audience with pride.

**See also:** Army Nurse Corps; Blanchfield, Florence; Cochran, Jacqueline; Corregidor; courtship; Dauser, Sue; enlistment standards; European Theater of Operation; Flikke, Julia; Hobby, Oveta Culp; Jensen, Agnes; magazines; marriage; Marines, Women; McAfee, Mildred; Navy Nurse Corps; pay; recreation; recruitment; Rogers, Edith Nourse; Smith, Margaret Chase; SPARS; Stratton, Dorothy; Streeter, Ruth Cheney; underutilization; WASPS; WAVES; Women's Army Corps



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## RATIONING

War inherently means shortages. This was true in World War II even for civilians who were thousands of miles from battlefields that wreak destruction. Shortages of such things as coffee and sugar, which must be shipped from the tropics through submarine-filled seas, can be easily understood. Even items produced in the United States quickly became scarce as, for example, car plants switched to making jeeps and appliance factories started making military gear. Sociologist Mildred Edie spelled it out early in 1942:

For the coming year, at least half our productive effort must be spent making things that civilians cannot eat, wear, or live in—making things for military use. And goods are also scarce because some commodities like silk, rubber, and tin aren't produced here and must be brought across hazardous oceans on crowded ships.

The housewife's job as purchasing agent for her family suddenly became much more complex. Because sugar cane fields in the Philippines were cut off, for instance, she could not obtain this fundamental; nor could she drive to find it—or vanilla or cocoa or pineapple or dozens of such things—because supplies of gas and tires also were interrupted. Canned foods became scarce both because of the tin shortage and because military food needs took priority. A silk blouse was beyond hope: Asian sources would be cut off for years, and what silk was available went for parachutes and gunpowder bags. Newly invented nylon and rayon also had to go into military clothing and gear. Wool usually came



Children in Fairfax, Virginia learn rationing rules at school.  
Courtesy of National Archives

from England or Australia, which were fighting for survival, and even humble cotton now was needed for tents and other heavy military uses. All things made of metal, from safety pins to refrigerators, became nearly unavailable as metal instead went to ships and planes and guns. No vehicles for civilian use were made during World War II; only used cars could be bought.

Prices naturally rise when many people compete for the same item, and because the rich can outbid the poor, inflation grows and the entire economy suffers. As the cost of living soared, economists from left to right argued for government intervention. "Only a system that combines price control with rationing" would solve the problem, the liberal *New Republic* editorialized early in the war, and conservative *Business Week* echoed the thought: "In total war" such as this, even fascists "recognized ... supplies can never come up to demand ... Rich and poor share in abstention." Indeed, Germany and Japan had imposed rationing from the beginning of their war plans; Britain adopted it when prices rose dramatically after its September 1939 entry.

The new Office of Price Administration (OPA) had two basic purposes: (1) to prevent inflation and its resultant diminishment of the value of the dollar by imposing price ceilings that kept necessities affordable, and (2) rationing, the distribution of essential goods in scarce supply as equally as possible, so that poor people had a defined share. When men were being drafted to give their lives, they needed assurance

that their families could buy the fundamentals of food, apparel, and winter heat. Polls soon showed that a large majority preferred rationing to taking the risk of trying to compete for what they needed.

It was the sort of cooperative attitude on which most women based their lives, and they soon set about learning the language of certificate rationing, coupon and stamp rationing, value points, tokens, and other new nomenclature. By October 1942, *Business Week* reported that 76 percent of women said they understood the system (compared with 53 percent of men). In December, the same magazine added that women had made “rationing a topic of daily conversation, thereby educating themselves rapidly.” Food rationing began on May 5, 1942, with sugar, a relatively simple thing to administer.

By modern standards, the limit does not sound particularly onerous: the sugar ration was twelve ounces, or nearly a pound, per person per week. At that time, however, many women baked their families’ sweetened food from scratch, and the quota was not enough for as many cookies, cakes, and pies as in the past: the ration was exactly half of previous usage, as the prewar average American consumed twenty-four ounces per week. For children, the worst aspect of sugar rationing was that candy and gum also were rationed. Restaurants, too, had limits, and many removed sugar from tables; *Business Week* even told of a restaurant where a “lady presides at the mammoth sugar bowl.” Throughout the war, sugar headed the list of things that people most missed. If given a ration windfall and a choice between twenty-five pounds of sugar, fifteen gallons of gasoline, five pounds of butter or five pounds of steak, almost half told *Scholastic* they wanted sugar; steak, gas, and butter followed in that order.

Radio and magazines were filled with advice on substitutes; the media also reminded people that sugar was scarce not merely because it was imported, but also because it was used in making explosives. Ann Starrett told those too young to remember World War I that “sugar cane makes molasses; molasses makes ethyl alcohol; and alcohol makes the powder which fires the guns ... [and] not only gunpowder but torpedo fuel, dynamite ... and thousands of militarily important chemicals.” Even after the U.S. Navy retook the South Atlantic from Germany, the sugar ration was raised only slightly. Industrial needs remained, and ship space was prioritized for supplying the D-Day invasion. When the war ended in 1945, Secretary of Agriculture Clinton Anderson still could not predict an end to sugar rationing because Pacific cane fields and refineries had been destroyed.

Coffee had similar import problems, but its scarcity and subsequent price increase seemed to have more to do with hoarding. Affluent caffeine addicts stripped stores of coffee after Pearl Harbor—at a rate that made it appear coffee consumption had soared from thirteen pounds per person in 1941 to sixteen pounds the next year. It was difficult for average people to get their fair share, and coffee rationing began on November 29, 1942. The allotted amount was spartan: ration coupons were given only to those over age fifteen, it

averaged out to one pound every five weeks—or a few drops more than one cup per day.

It was particularly difficult for those whose ethnic heritage meant lots of coffee. Historian Lisa Ossian, for instance, wrote of the sad demise of “an old Swedish custom in Iowa—coffee at 3:30.” Ads soon appeared for chicory and other additives to make a weak brew seem stronger. Restaurants already had cut back on refills, and some started serving coffee only at certain times of the day. No good substitutes for brewed coffee yet had been invented, and the first rationed pound, unfortunately, had to last through Christmas and New Years until January 2. Coffee lovers, however, had to endure their privation less long than those with a sweet tooth. The South Atlantic soon was peaceful enough that coffee from Latin America could arrive, and its rationing ended July 29, 1943.

Meat rationing also was a matter of transportation: trains and trucks that carried it from farm to city had to be used for war materiel instead. The military also claimed huge amounts, but meat rationing primarily aimed at inflation. A few years earlier, during the Great Depression, non-farm people rarely could afford steak, but with higher-paying jobs in new defense industries, they could. Virtually no one in this era was a vegetarian, and, as incomes rose, so did meat consumption and its price. Because those on fixed incomes found it unaffordable, the OPA issued warnings throughout 1942, and then began rationing the next March.

The amount was relatively generous, allotting about two-and-a-half pounds per person per week. Because one pound of meat is not of equal quality with another pound, the OPA introduced a new “point system,” with “tokens” as change, in addition to the coupons and stamps used earlier. The intention was to limit the amount of steaks, chops, and other expensive cuts that any one person could buy, and it turned a marketing trip into an arithmetic exercise. The Office of War Information (OWI) provided countless pamphlets, posters, and advertisements to explain rationing, and its newspaper ad to explain the new system was highly detailed:

Here’s the WHAT and HOW of the RATION TOKEN

WHAT IS IT?

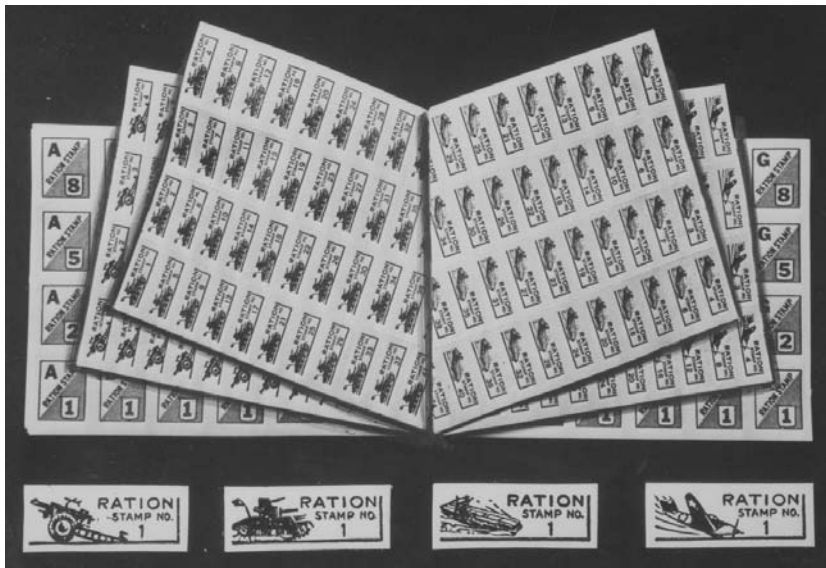
The token system is a new simplified plan for handling ration stamps.

All red and blue stamps ... are now worth 10 points ... When purchases are made, *one point* tokens will be given as “change”—red tokens for red stamps and blue tokens for blue stamps. Tokens may be spent later—with or without stamps. They are valid indefinitely. They cannot be given in change *unless* a purchase is made.

HOW IT HELPS YOU

It saves you trouble. Tokens are carried just like any other change... A quick glance at your ration book tells you how many points you have and you have 60% fewer stamps to handle.

The ad continued with eight explanatory illustrations in a “HOW IT WORKS” section, ending with “IMPORTANT!”



Various types of ration stamps had different purposes, and women had to learn the complex rules for buying everything from butter to gasoline. *Courtesy of National Archives*

Point values of brown and green stamps are “NOT changed.” Many OWI writers were women who themselves were housewives, but even with explanations, the system was difficult to understand. Ultimately, it was storekeepers who primarily educated the public and enforced the rules; fortunately, the era was such that many customers had personal relationships with their grocers and other retailers. Even in cities, neighborhood stores knew their customers personally and often knew how large a family was and whether or not a ration coupon was valid.

Many writers expanded on this point: if you cheat, they said, someone will find out and there will be gossip. Your delivery boy might see the sugar in your kitchen; your neighbors will speculate about how you can serve coffee so generously; or even your maid, if she has loved ones in combat, might report you to the authorities. Domestic workers remained fairly common in much of the country, especially the South, and grilling an illegal steak was best done on the cook’s day off.

The OWI and private media advised women on how to prepare lower-point meat cuts and especially fish; because of lesser demand, it was not rationed. The demand for meat remained high, however, and it was the area in which there was the most cheating. Reporter Patricia Lochridge traveled some eleven thousand miles posing as a customer without a ration book; she found that with effort, she could buy almost anything anywhere. Again, though, personal connections and even appropriate dress mattered. A dozen stores on Chicago’s South Side turned her down when she tried to buy frankfurters without a ration coupon, but then she “noticed other customers purchasing meat without red coupons and guessed that the butchers had suspected I didn’t belong in that neighborhood.” Her appearance fit in the affluent areas of Evanston and Oak Park, and there she bought her hot dogs without ration points by paying ten cents per pound over the official price. Lochridge continued:

Almost everywhere I had the same experience. In Kansas City a butcher sold me a perfectly good ten-pound ham because it was “in immediate danger of spoilage.” Under OPA regulations such meat may be sold without [ration] points, but the price must be reduced accordingly. Instead, I paid 16 cents a pound above the legal ceiling.

Cheese could not substitute for meat, as it also was rationed; it was the dairy product most easily shipped abroad. Innovations in food processing techniques allowed dried milk to be sent to soldiers, and predictions of fresh milk rationing never proved true, although, of course, it was price controlled. Evaporated milk was rationed—not so much because of the milk, but because of the metal in its cans. Butter was strictly rationed, and it was the dairy product that civilians most missed. Rationing in other nations was much more severe, of course, and Ethel Gorham, an excellent writer who cleverly coped with shortages to maintain her reputation as a Washington, D.C., hostess, told of her experience with an English boy whose parents sent him to safety in America. When he sat down to his first meal, he “tried to pass the pat of butter on his bread plate around the table. He thought that the little square was meant for the whole party of six.”

Poignant stories such as that reminded Americans that their rationing was a minor discomfort compared with what others were going through. Many media voices echoed the thought, and midway through the war, in October 1943, *Ladies Home Journal* scolded its audience: “Hitler would laugh his fool head off if he were collecting garbage in this country ... We throw away four billion dollars worth of edible food a year ... four times as much as we sent aboard last year.” The media stressed conservation efforts, one of which encouraged women to save their bacon grease and other fats. Butchers bought it from them, and eventually such fats were used as explosives.

Imported cooking fats such as olive oil also were cut off, and as late as October 1945, when the war was over, Agri-



culture Secretary Anderson said “the world will be short of requirements for fats and oils for many months, and rationing will have to be continued until supplies are available.” Butter substitutes such as margarine were not yet developed, and home economists worked to create recipes intended to evade shortages. The most popular may have been “War Cake.”

Canned goods were the final category of rationed food. Labor shortages meant unpicked harvests in the summer of 1942, but the Women’s Land Army helped solve that problem. Instead, canned foods were rationed not so much because of their contents but because of the metal. Civilians were allotted a mere 15 percent of the nation’s steel production in 1943, and the result was rationing of nearly everything that came in metal containers—which in a pre-plastic era, was much more than now. This area of rationing imposed great difficulty, especially on city women who could not grow victory gardens, and it was worse in the short-summer North than in the South. Feminist writer Susan B. Anthony II explained the implications for women who also were working long hours in defense industries:

Shortages of meats and vegetables, and even of the lowly potato, mean that instead of the quick dash to the grocery store for food, you have to wander around to two or three or even more stores before you can find what you need or want for properly balanced meals. One week there is no hamburger, the next week, no tomatoes. You scurry around, wasting time and rationed shoe-leather ...

The shortage and rationing of canned goods affects workers more than any other group ... Cuts of meat which are cheaper both in money and ration points means more hours cooking. A steak can broil in a few minutes. Pot roast takes hours.

The one area in which people ate more from a can was meat, and many letters from servicemen’s wives make wry reference to him enjoying steak while she ate Spam. But rationing and price controls did assured people of a fair share of food, and, as Anthony suggested, that also was the case for clothing and shoes. Materials for textiles and leather goods, much of which had been imported in the past, were in short supply—but more important, available goods had to go for literally millions of soldiers, who needed hundreds of varieties of uniforms and types of shoes. Textile, garment, and shoe factories prioritized those government contracts. The media urged changes in dress styles that required less fabric—with the ironic result that people felt compelled to buy the new “patriotic” fashions. Bed and bath linens, especially sheets, also were limited. There was much less urgency in fabric conservation than in food, however, and most advertising for women’s wear reflected little change.

The greatest effect was on women with children. Adults could update and wear out their wardrobe, but growing children simply had to have replacement clothes and shoes. “More than anything else,” a young woman told Starrett, “I miss zipper coveralls ... The last pair I found cost \$1 instead of the former 69 cents.” It was the metal in the zipper that caused the price increase, and although some 90 percent of

retail items eventually were priced controlled, the OPA had difficulty determining every possible violation. This woman went on to suggest coping techniques, including making clothes from old curtains. Writer Margaret Davidson suggested cutting up unused purses for leather patches to sew on elbows and knees, the places where children were most likely to wear out their clothes. She also reminded women to choose their dry cleaner carefully: “Normally it’s unfortunate if garments are ruined in cleaning. Today, it’s tragic.”

Of all apparel shortages, women’s nylons got the most publicity. This was partly because of their newness: until just a few years earlier, there was no alternative to expensive silk or ugly cotton stockings. Other attention, however, seemed to be primarily because of men’s fascination with women’s legs. Despite the draft, most reporters still were male, and they liked writing on the topic. Because nylons were not a necessity, they never were rationed, but price ceilings were imposed in November 1942, when *Newsweek* reported that the OPA had found them selling at inflated levels “in almost every store in the country.” More than any other item, nylons were used as a tool of sexual harassment, and some businessmen were reported to keep a desk drawer of them. Preventing runs was very important; a ruined pair was not easily replaced.

As Anthony said, there were unpredictable shortages of this or that item, but housing shortages became so persistent and unmanageable that the OPA ended up largely ignoring its rent control intentions. Obtaining materials for private new housing was absolutely impossible, and even people in government-sponsored housing often had to wait months for plumbing or electrical items. Beyond that, even military people who were housed and fed and clothed by the government faced some deprivations. They typically bought non-government issue items at a PX, or post exchange, stores for the exclusive use of military personnel. Nona Johnson, who served at the Marine Corps headquarter in Arlington, Virginia, said her PX “supplied us with items that civilians found difficult to obtain,” but nonetheless had some shortages. So when the word got out that a scarce item had been received:

the lines didn’t take long to stretch well out the door. Candy, gum, and cigarettes were rationed and we were issued cards which had to be punched when we made a purchase. We could purchase only 4 candy bars at one time ... Other items that were scarce [for civilians] and available to us were soap, kleenex and all items for personal grooming along with rubber boots. Film was a very hard item to obtain.

Johnson did not smoke, and she used her cigarette ration to buy them for her father, mailing packages to her Minneapolis home. Cigarettes were included in the (free) rations that went to soldiers overseas, and cigarette rationing in the United States was not sufficiently onerous to cut down on smoking, a habit that young women had begun in the Roaring Twenties. Prior to that, tobacco had been a male purview, and most advertising on rationed gasoline and tires also was aimed at men. Like canned goods, gasoline for civilian use was rationed not so much because of domestic shortages (most petroleum then was produced in the U.S.), but instead

because the supply of rubber for tires was cut off. Raw rubber from the South Pacific would not be available until that front was won, and synthetic rubber was not yet out of experimental laboratories. Like a prescient parent, the government limited civilian driving by limiting gasoline—so that tires would last long into an unforeseeable future.

Gasoline and tires thus were chronologically the first category of rationing, even before foods. They were tied together and based on occupation—usually that of a male household head. Gas could be bought with three types of coupons that varied by occupational needs, but tires could not be purchased at all without a certificate from one's local ration board. Moreover, when the first gas ration books were issued *Life* said that people had to “declare (under threat of penalties) that they had in their possession no more than five tires per car”—or the essential four and one spare.

This rationing also affected women, increasing the isolation of housewives no longer free to drive to town, but the worst effect was on women who ran small businesses. Customers could no longer shop freely, and many preschool programs, for example, were forced to close because mothers could not risk wearing out a tire to deliver children. Women in the tourism business lost their jobs and investments, as there was virtually no leisure travel or family vacations for the four years of the war. Travel of all sorts was curtailed for civilians, and crowded trains and buses gave priority to military passengers.

As the winter of 1942 approached, petroleum rationing extended to household heat. “Fuel oil,” *Business Week* said in early September, “is the most complicated rationing program yet tackled.” Corporate and residential uses had to be further broken down by areas of the country, as a Maine resident naturally needed more fuel than someone in Florida. Again, OWI women and others undertook educational campaigns, telling housewives that sixty-five degrees was the maximum allowable temperature for winter days, with nights to be even chillier. Mothers closed off attics and basements that had been playrooms and confined children to a few warm rooms. Especially in rural areas, women recently accustomed to modern furnaces found themselves returning to wood stoves for both heating and cooking; many burned corn cobs and other substitutes for petroleum.

“Certificate rationing” not only was used for tires, but also for metal goods. Already in February of 1942, just two months after Pearl Harbor, *Current History* reported that “the production of refrigerators, vacuum cleaners, home radios, washing-machines,... [and] sewing machines was stopped and that of ... many other standard consumer goods sharply curtailed.” Wives of servicemen especially were affected by this: if they followed their husbands to an assignment within the United States, there was almost no chance of being able to buy a washer or other appliances necessary to running a household. The same was true for the many women who moved to boom towns to work in defense industries. Although their wallets might be fat, they could not buy a replacement for a broken stove or a leaking sink or even pots and pans.

New brides were glad to accept a used mixer or toaster as a shower gift. Radios were especially important to lonely women for war news and escapist entertainment, but most families at this time had only one. Many young women leaving home had to call friends to find a used radio.

Like almost everything else in this era, local ration boards that issued these certificates and other right-to-buy documentation were composed of almost entirely of white businessmen. Women in most states were not considered full citizens until 1920, when the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution assured them of the vote, and only two decades had passed since people began thinking of women as eligible for governmental appointments. Although OPA chief Prentiss Brown frequently stressed the importance of housewives in carrying out rationing, very few served on ration boards.

In part, this may have been because boards for drafting men into the military were composed of male community leaders, and the first rationing of tires and gas was another accepted male venue—but mostly, it was old political habit that simply didn't consider women. They were praised and cajoled for “doing their part,” but almost always excluded from real authority. Nor did the League of Women Voters or any other women's organization issue loud objections or push the appointments of women, some of whom would have been better qualified than men. As with other public service, once policies were established and volunteers were needed to carry them out, women were welcome to donate their time for clerical duties. The likely scenario would be, for example, that the local banker attended evening board meetings to make decisions, while his wife doled out ration documents by day.

Both board members and clerical workers were volunteers, as were many of the workers in almost one hundred regional OPA offices. They functioned largely as social workers, patiently explaining rationing to the ignorant, listening to the range of human problems, and weighing the evidence on special needs and allegedly lost or stolen ration books. Most people cooperated with rationing, and a Gallup poll in May of 1945, about the time of V-E Day, showed that a solid three-quarters of Americans thought that purchasing outside of the rationing system was wrong. By a margin of 77 to 71 percent, women were slightly more honest than men. And although the evidence is anecdotal, not statistical, news articles on black marketeers routinely featured men as both buyer and seller; women occasionally were cited as buyers, but no report mentioned a female clerk who sold without proper ration documentation.

Equitable distribution was the very heart of the system, and a 1943 OWI photograph provided a particularly compelling illustration of that. Taken in front of a New Orleans store with a new supply of shoes, it showed that even in the segregated South, people had to wait their turn. The line was headed by a young white woman with a toddler; next was an older woman of indeterminate race; then came a young white soldier, a black woman, and a well-dressed, middle-aged black man. African-American women had genuine cause to

complain of discrimination in many areas of life, but rationing rarely was one of them.

Various areas of rationing ended when supplies became sufficient, and most Americans again were generous when it became clear after the war that much of the world faced famine. Winning the war meant responsibility for feeding not only hungry allies in Britain and Russia, but also dependent peoples in former fascist-occupied territory from Denmark to Manchuria. *Christian Century* editorialized:

For the sake of the half-billion in Europe and Asia threatened with starvation, the United States should restore food rationing ... Food supplies in Germany ... have recently been reduced again until they are now within a couple of hundred calories of the rations in the terrible Belsen concentration camp ... Conditions in France and Italy [are] far worse than after the First World War ... India is entering into what is likely to be the worse famine in its history; in great sections of China the population is already living on grass and clay.

An April 1946 Gallup poll found that more than two-thirds of the public was willing to return to food rationing if it would help prevent starvation abroad. Women were appreciably more generous than men in this case; 72 percent were willing to go back to rationing; just 58 percent of men agreed. The government, however, never asked for this additional sacrifice, and rationing was not restored. Through the Marshall Plan, the idea of General George Marshall that was partially implemented by Assistant Secretary of Defense Anna Rosenberg, prosperity returned overseas. Occupied Germany and Japan did not starve, and although Britain remained on rationing for almost a decade after the war's end, that was largely to prevent inflation and subsequent class resentments.

American women bore the burden of most rationing, so they also deserve the credit for making the system work. Despite stereotypes of compulsive shoppers, women did an excellent job of controlling inflation by observing rationing rules. They managed to understand and use a complex system that largely excluded them from decision making. Rationing became an accepted part of wartime life: so much so that writer Constance Foster told of a Sunday school in which children were asked to draw the single most valuable possession that Noah would take onto his ark. Every child in the class drew Noah with a ration book.

*See also:* **advertising; African-American women; boom towns; British women; cigarettes; children; conservation; D-Day; defense industries; dieticians; dress; domestic workers; draft; food shortages; hoarding; home economics; housework; housing; inflation; letters; magazines; Marines, Women; occupied Germany and Japan; Office of Price Administration; Office of War Information; Pearl Harbor; postwar; pregnancy; Rosenberg, Anna; sexual harassment; travel; underutilization; uniforms; victory gardens; volunteers; War Cake; wives of servicemen; Women's Land Army**

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## RECREATION

Given the crucial nature of World War II, it is somewhat surprising that leaders encouraged leisure, but that often was true. Especially the USO (United Services Organization) was explicitly created to give young soldiers, the vast majority of them male, an opportunity to relax and enjoy themselves in wholesome ways. Young women often fitted into wartime recreation as ancillary to men, but the effect was the same: women, too, danced, watched movies, played ping pong and checkers, and otherwise found ways to have fun.

The new women's military units also recognized the need for recreation. Because recruits spent much of their day marching and doing calisthenics, there was not much need for physical exercise—but there was mental need for doing things that were not rigidly controlled by others. Especially after they were assigned to desk jobs, many military women organized softball and basketball teams and played against each other. The Army's Special Services provided uniforms for various sports, and equipment could be obtained for everything from badminton to printed "all-girl skirts"—as Mattie Treadwell, historian of the Women's Army Corps (WAC), termed theatrics performed by WAC troupes. It also would be Special Services that delivered projectors and films when troops had the chance to catch a movie. Some WACs were assigned to Special Services, including Camilla Mays Frank, who arranged tours by celebrities such as singer Dinah Shore in the European Theater of Operations (ETO). She wrote her memoirs, as did Iceland recreation worker Jane Goodell.

The military also had a long tradition of "dayrooms," which primarily were used as evening gathering places for

soldiers whose "home" was a bunk bed. A dayroom usually had a small selection of magazines and books, card tables and board games, a radio, phonograph, access to a movie projector, and sometimes a piano. Women spent leisure time in these dayrooms, something the headquarters back in Washington, D.C., encouraged with the publication of a WAC songbook. Male soldiers, however, generally preferred to get out of the military setting whenever that was possible. Usually their motivation was the hope of meeting local girls, but Treadwell also described dayroom "Army-issued furniture [as] heavy and depressing." Women found ways to make them more cheerful, but soon discovered that every female barrack actually needed two such recreation rooms.

Traditional dating meant that the man went to the woman's place, but, as Treadwell posed the problem, a "dayroom filled with dating couples dancing to a jukebox was scarcely a comfortable place in which older women and non-daters might lounge about in ... bathrobes." Especially in England, WACs solved this problem with the help of local women's organizations that provided additional space and/or furnishings—but for inexplicable reasons, "the Army, early in 1945, forbade solicitation of basic dayroom furnishings from civilian organizations."

Other recreational regulations made more sense, and especially within the United States, the military protected its members by inspecting places they were likely to patronize and declaring them "off limits" if they failed to meet standards. Cafes that were dirty or charged too much or served tainted food, for example, could be deemed "off limits," with military police enforcing the ban on eating there. In at least one town, military police closed local movie theaters until they cleaned and got rid of vermin, including rats. Night clubs or pool halls or bowling alleys that permitted illegal gambling soon found themselves off-limits, as, of course, did brothels or other venues that encouraged venereal disease.



Dancing outdoors at the Women Marine Barracks, Moanalua Ridge, Hawaii, 1945. Courtesy of Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.

The fear of being declared off-limits was a huge incentive for the excessively profited-minded to clean up the way they did business.

Military bands, with their spiffy uniforms and shining instruments, provided a contrasting image. They not only played for ceremonial occasions, but also for dances and concerts, particularly on holidays. Everyone in the civilian entertainment business understood that they could boost their own career by volunteering for troops, and free musical comedy shows given by volunteers were frequent both at home and abroad. Gimmicks were endless: the Marine Corps' Nona Johnson, for example, said that major movie star Tyrone Power once came to the corps' headquarters and shined shoes for both male and female Marines. In archives at the University of Central Arkansas, Marie Kimbell recalled that "while in boot camp, I got my picture on the cover of *Life* magazine—in a sea of WAVE faces as they looked up at Frank Sinatra."

Women in the Army Nurse Corps were officers, and prior to the war, were accustomed to swimming pools, tennis courts, and other officer club amenities. They were the female corps most directly affected by the war's beginning, however, and recreational opportunities soon disappeared. Especially women stationed in the Pacific Theater of Operations were confined to barbed-wire enclosed compounds for months at a time, and their morale suffered. Visiting Australia was their best chance to re-create themselves, and author Barbara Tomblin found that African-American ANC members were pleased to find less racial discrimination there than at home. Stationed in New Guinea, they went to Australia on leave and enjoyed "trips, luncheons, and ... recreational facilities—a new experience for many of us."

The "Rosie the Riveters" who worked in U.S. defense industries rarely enjoyed organized recreation in the way that military women did, but enlightened personnel managers encouraged it. Some plants had baseball or softball teams for young women who still had the energy to play after work, and many members of the All-American Girls Professional Baseball League previously played on teams that were sponsored by defense industries. A Long Island aircraft factory not only had "great athletic programs," but also "permitted dancing during noontime." A worker there told oral historian Roy Hoppes that "we had fantastic orchestras and bands ... This was all to keep the workers' attendance extremely high—almost make it fun to come to work." Other companies offered occasional socializing such as parties and picnics, especially connected with holidays.

There also were job-related social groups such as the WOWs, or Women Ordnance Workers—but on the other hand, no group of people suffered as much from a lack of recreational opportunities as did the women who worked in munitions plants. Because of the danger of explosions, they usually were located in rural areas—and when thousands of young women were recruited to small towns, the local theater or skating rink proved grossly inadequate. No organization reached out to these young women in

the systematic way that the USO and other groups did for military members.

Worse, local residents often made it clear that they resented the presence of these newcomers in their boom town. Writer Mary Heaton Vorse spoke of how "nice girls" in Elkton, Maryland, did not go to town on Saturday nights, choosing to avoid the new, presumably wild women who worked in munitions there. The response of many city fathers was to create curfews, which meant that swing shift workers had little chance of finding an open theater or restaurant. Few such women owned cars or had the ability to go anywhere else on weekends, so their lives were depressingly boring. Rarely did anyone arrange for these "production soldiers" to meet actual soldiers: instead, the usual scenario was that USO volunteers were non-workers—and there were a dozen males for every one of them. The same was true at Red Cross canteens and other gathering places aimed at young men; much more could have been done to get them together with the young women in isolated defense plants.

"Government girls" and other women working in big cities, especially Washington, often used their leisure time for free or low-cost cultural activities. More than men, their diaries and letters show them going to museums and concerts, picnicking on the Potomac or hiking the hills of San Francisco. WAC Anne Bosanko Green, for example, saw famed Arturo Toscanini conduct the Los Angeles symphony courtesy of the local chapter of AWVS (American Women's Voluntary Services). Marie Kimbell, whose experience in the WAVES is in archives at the University of Central Arkansas, said "sight-seeing in N.Y.C. was quite an experience for a girl who grew up on a cotton farm in Arkansas." Women assigned to Europe especially were likely to behave as tourists in their off-duty hours, seeing as much of their new locale as possible.

Both overseas and in the United States, however, such travel was difficult because of gas rationing and overcrowded public transportation, but churches sometimes arranged transportation for those who wanted to attend. Women definitely were more likely than men to spend Sunday mornings there, and several diaries tell of men, both at home and abroad, who joined church activities to meet women. Not infrequently, church members invited newcomers home for Sunday dinner or used a precious gallon of gas to show them local sights. Jane Pollock amusingly told of an elderly couple who saved their gas ration and invited WACs to Tennessee's Lookout Mountain. She was terrified by the man's driving, but he insisted that no woman could do manage the trip—even though her occupation was driving Motor Pool trucks and jeeps.

Mary Dandouweris was a student at the University of Wisconsin during the war, and she told interviewer Hoopes:

There was an army camp in Madison, with a lot of troops stationed there. There was the Red Cross [canteen] ... I remember being introduced to square dancing by the Texas troops ... I remember it as a good time—except that ... girls had to be in at ten at night on weekdays and midnight on weekends. But there were student lounges. They used to



WAVES Softball Team, Naval Air Station Cecil Field, Jacksonville, Florida, 1945. *Courtesy of Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

call them the Passion Pits because there was an awful lot of passionate kissing ... The fronts of the dorms would be just jammed at quitting time ... with the sailors and the marines and the army people—whoever was on campus—kissing the girls good night. But it wasn't wild.

Hers were typical memories, in which dancing is the most commonly mentioned activity. Those dances almost always were organized by other women, usually as volunteers, but some women were employed in the field of recreation. *Recreation* magazine already was extant for them, and although the only attention it gave to military women was an article titled "WACs Wiles Are Womanly," it did recognize women as recreation professionals.

Army nurse Lucy Wainwright told Tomblin about the difference that such a professional could make in the lives of WACs and ANC members stationed in the remote CBI, as the China-Burma-India theater was called. Women had created their own fun with camel rides and swimming, but after the 1943 arrival of Red Cross women, Wainwright said, "We had movies three times a week ... We have one very good social worker ... she and two others have turned a ward into a recreation room. They have two ping pong tables and a horseshoe set, and some games." In a time before television, much less I-Pods, that rec room provided their best form of fun.

*See also:* **absenteeism; adolescence; African-American women; All-American Girls Professional Baseball**

**League; American Women's Voluntary Services; Army Nurse Corps; bands, military; boom towns; colleges; courtship; defense industries; employment; European Theater of Operations; government girls; labor force; motor pools; munitions; radio; movies; occupied Japan; prostitution; rationing; recruitment; Red Cross; "Rosie the Riveter"; travel; uniforms; venereal disease; volunteers; USO; Women's Army Corps; WOW**

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## RECRUITMENT

World War II recruitment of women aimed at three major areas: women were needed in the military, in defense industries, and as volunteers for a variety of causes. Especially in the first two cases, the primary message was that women had a patriotic duty to replace men who had gone to war.

At the very beginning of what became the Women's Army Corps, there was no need for recruitment: the mere announcement brought more than 13,000 applicants for the first 540 training slots. That reservoir of eagerness could be expected to dry up, of course, and by mid-1943, it was evident that women were no more likely than men to entrust their fate to the vagaries and discomforts of military life. Unlike men, women were not threatened by the draft and therefore had to be recruited.



## RECRUITMENT

Unfortunately, much of the early free publicity on the Army's first non-nursing women excessively glamorized the corps and/or diminished it by focusing on the trivial, including even uniform underwear. *Time* was among the media guilty of this, and its writers acknowledged in its May 10, 1943, issue that the corps "had endured cheap jokes and poor public relations." Worse, some of this publicity was not merely sexist, but an outright "slander campaign" by right-wingers. Before it had truly begun, WAC recruitment was seriously damaged.

A second factor in WAC recruitment actually was positive: military men had no idea how valuable these women would be, and as their performance exceeded that of the men they replaced, commanders wanted more. Within the first three months of accepting women, Army Air Force leaders wanted 540,000 additional "Air WACs." That was an impossible goal, as the WAC was not even close to meeting its congressionally authorized quota of 150,000. *Time* spelled out the reality in December:

The bitter truth is out: recruiting for the WAC has been such a failure that officials last week admitted they were hopeless of filling their quota, figure they will be lucky to keep even a trickle of recruits coming in. War Department officials are afraid they may have got all the women volunteers they ever will get ...

WAVES, who did just a little better than their quota, have also been getting a cold shoulder in recent months ... SPARS and Marine Reserves reached their smaller goals some time ago. But in recent weeks their recruiting has also been hamstrung.

The latter three corps were the Navy's female units, which benefited from lower and more realistic expectations. The Army had recruited more women on its first day than the Coast Guard's SPARS in the entire four years of the war—but because the WAC had assigned itself higher goals, it was judged a failure. The naval corps were able to learn from WAC experience, and one of the ways in which that was reflected was the advertising message. Posters and other recruiting formats for the Navy's female corps were less likely to opt for the "replace a man" message and more likely to emphasize professional opportunity for women themselves. One, for examples, depicted two WAVES walking on a shore near military boats, with city skyscrapers in the background and read: "Don't miss your great opportunity—he Navy needs you in the WAVES."

It was radio recruitment that prompted Marie Kimball and her friend to enlist in the WAVES, even though they already were directly contributing to war effort. In WAVES archives at the University of Central Arkansas, Kimball wrote:

I was one of two girls working in the drafting department of a ship building company in Mobile, Ala. As we sat at our drawing desk working on plans for a hospital ship, we were listening to the radio. They were saying how much they needed girls to take over jobs in the Navy ... Joan said, "Let's go!" I said, "OK!" and on the way home from work,

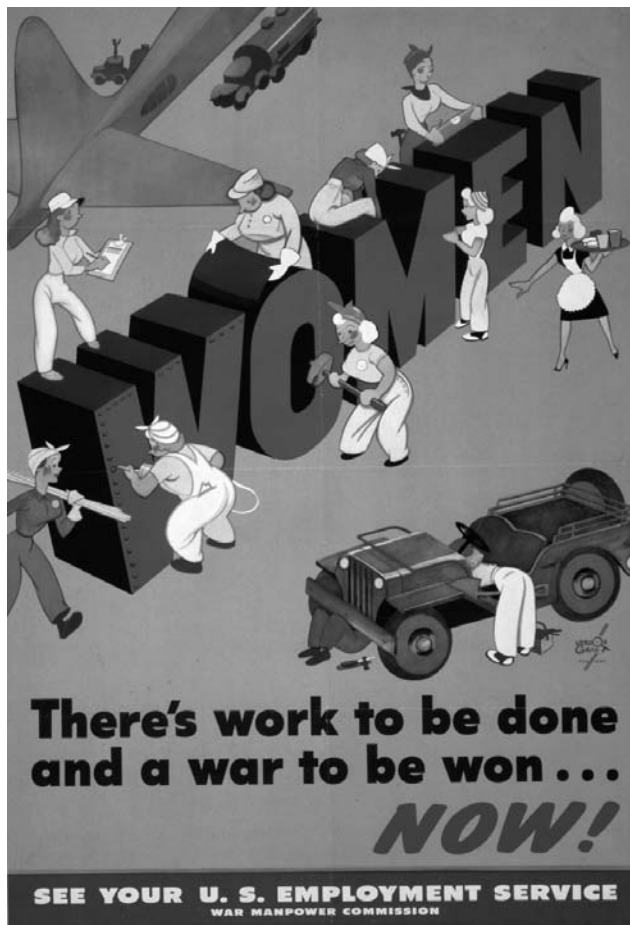
we stopped at the recruiting office and signed up. We were sworn in at New Orleans.

Other recruitment targeted other kinds of women. One print ad showed a WAVE standing next to the fading image of a male sailor and said: "Be On the Same Team—Enlist in the WAVES." This aimed at women whose husbands or intended-husbands already were in the Navy. Many men enlisted in it to avoid being drafted for the Army's infantry, and this ad intended to create a realization that husbands/fiancés could be free to resume marital life sooner if wives/fiancées supported them by enlisting. The "same team" phrase even sublimely held out hope that they might serve close enough together to see each other. Whether this actually would happen was not a good bet, as requirements on marital status and other enlistment standards changed often, but the message reinforced family feelings as motivation for enlistment.

No matter how ads were tweaked, military recruitment focused on the positive. In addition to print, radio, and movie theater advertising, the military also held many recruitment rallies and parades. These often featured entertainment stars who drew a crowd, and the audience then heard from both the stars and recruiters how much women were needed. Military bands composed of women often played, and in an era when airplanes still were relatively new, planes often flew over as an added attraction. That was especially likely in recruitment for Air WACs—but as the war went on, women became more resistant to such recruitment techniques. Historian Kathleen Boom quoted one male recruiting officer in February 1944, a time when Americans increasingly (and falsely) were convinced that the war already was won:

When our team hit one Florida city, we closed the place—actually got the mayor to close schools and stores so everyone would come to our parade and rally. We got important speakers, generals, war heroes. Better than 50 planes flew overhead forming the letters WAC. That night we had a big dance for prospects, with good-looking pilots as dates. Results? We didn't get one Wac in that town. Some of the local girls put in applications to please their escorts, but withdrew them the next day.

By far the most serious recruitment problem was nurses, who were axiomatically considered to be female in this era. From the war's beginning, when the United States lost battles on Bataan and Corregidor, the shortage of nurses was dire. Both the Navy Nurse Corps and the Army Nurse Corps conducted endless targeted campaigns. Recruiters worked nursing schools and used mechanisms such as the Cadet Nurse Corps and the Bolton Act to bring more women into nursing. They also focused on women who had abandoned the profession, but neither positive images on travel and career opportunities nor pleas of patriotic duty ever brought enough. The Red Cross and other agencies also focused on nurse recruitment, but shortages remained so severe that, with the Nurses Selective Service Act of 1945, Congress almost drafted women in this profession.



Despite its cartoonish approach to war, this poster was typical of recruitment. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

The public supported nurse recruitment, of course, but many people had mixed feelings about the very existence of the non-nursing corps—and especially the “replace a man” message that the military found so appropriate. Doris McMilan, who was stationed with the SPARS in New Orleans, told author Emily Yellin of a traumatic incident that demonstrated a result of this recruiting approach. McMilan was on a streetcar when an older woman attacked her with an umbrella, yelling “It’s your fault that my son is now at sea. If he’s killed, it’s your fault!” Some WACs had to deal with similar emotions directly with the affected men, especially the first WACs in North Africa: it was painfully clear that when they sat down to replace men at telephone switchboards, the men were bound for battle.

Recruiting “Rosie the Riveter” was much less emotionally complex. Except for the persistent question of working mothers and child care, recruitment could be presented as a totally positive decision. Unlike the military, defense industry jobs did not control every aspect of a woman’s life, and the pay was better than most ever had earned. The biggest problem with recruitment for defense industry workers instead was educating the public on its subtleties and local nature. The message had to be strong enough to recruit the millions of

women who, in fact, were needed, but focused enough so that every woman in Vermont did not decide that it was her duty to move to California and build airplanes.

Even Congress missed the point at the beginning: male leaders were so unaccustomed to working women that they assumed women would have to be drafted and compelled to work in defense factories. Legislation such as the Austin-Wadsworth Bill that would have drafted women for the labor force was seriously considered, and after that was dropped, many congressmen still wanted national registration of young women for industrial work similar to the registration of young men for the military draft.

That did not happen, either, except where local governments sponsored registration campaigns to assess the female labor supply. Most were in the defense production centers of the three the coasts or in the automobile hub of Detroit. Oregon, a major shipbuilding state, led the way in February of 1942 by mailing cards to women inquiring about their willingness to take non-traditional jobs. Detroit followed with a carefully planned registration/recruitment campaign. Every household in Wayne County received one of over 500,000 registration forms, and the result was 142,000 women available for work, 62 percent of whom wanted factory jobs. The campaign was conducted in August, and September hiring patterns showed that 80 percent of new employees were women. In the margins of their registration cards, some explained their motivation; *Business Week* reported notes such as, “My husband is in Australia, and I want to help make weapons for him.”

From small communities such as North Adams, Massachusetts, to big ones like Seattle, Washington, cities conducted similar recruitment campaigns to convince women who had been housewives all their lives that they were capable of—and needed in—non-traditional jobs. New Britain, Connecticut, used an especially creative follow-up method: about two dozen experienced female factory workers were hired to talk personally with “the five thousand women who had not replied” to the registration cards. According to Susan B. Anthony II, author of *Out of the Kitchen — And Into the War* (1943), the recruiters “told the housewife .. about war work as only a worker could do. The result was an average of sixty housewives ... recruited by each interviewer.”

In the same state, Groton shipyards also took an innovative approach to filling their labor needs: they specifically recruited women who were married to men assigned to naval submarines. Many of these women chose to live in the area, where they had the best chance of seeing their husbands if the sub returned to base—and no one had better motivation for doing a good job. Submarine construction was particularly difficult because of the close, claustrophobic quarters and the echoing din of machinery, but a woman who knew that her husband’s life might literally depend on it was careful about quality.

Connecticut also was the setting for Josephine Von Miklos’ *I Took A War Job* (1943). Experience in Europe made her aware of the seriousness of the war, and she experimented

with jobs in the munitions and shipbuilding industries before recruiting other women with her compelling book. One of the things she learned was that foremen were more likely to hire her if she hid her genuine mechanical skills until after she was on the job. Another Connecticut housewife, Louise Fillebrown, took a defense plant job and soon saw the world with new eyes:

My working day used to begin somewhere in the neighborhood of nine o'clock— or even ten ... The first morning on my new job I stumbled out of bed at six.

It was in early January ... It had snowed ... as I passed each house on our country road, a dark circle of cars ... headed towards the city ... I had never thought that Bridgeport could be beautiful, but ... I suddenly discerned in it a beauty that was strange yet warmly human. Patient people tramping blocks in the wind and cold, all intent on the work that lay ahead! I've changed many of my opinions about our laboring classes.

Radio played a big role in delivering the message. A housewife in coastal Virginia was typical when she wrote in *Harper's*: "Over and over for months I heard from the radio the call for women to enter war work. I had been delaying... but finally recognized these arguments in favor of my going to the shipyards." National groups such as Business & Professional Women (BPW) created master files of women with specialized abilities, and BPW's magazine, *Independent Woman*, never ran a wartime issue without addressing the need for women in the variety of war work. Other print media played its part, while the War Manpower Commission, the Office of War Information, and other agencies issued material for easy publication. Recruiting stories ran the range of magazine audiences: *American Magazine* explained "Why You Must Take a War Job;" *Fortune* said "The Margin Now is Womanpower;" and *Woman's Home Companion* bluntly proclaimed "Wake Up and Work."

Book publishers, too, helped with recruitment. Among the titles issued in 1942 and 1943 were: *Wanted: Women in War Industry*; *Mothers in Overalls*; *Wartime Opportunities for Women*; *Hit the Rivet, Sister*; and *Punch In, Susie!* In a 1943 review of eighteen such books, including novels, *Publisher's Weekly* said that the most successful was *Yes, Ma'am*, "the joint product of Lt. Elizabeth R. Pollack of the WAC, and Ruth Duhme, formerly director of publicity for Lippincott." Some recruitment books were written under pseudonyms, but other well known women lent their names to cause. Longtime leftists such as Elizabeth Gurley Flynn and Susan B. Anthony II, niece of the famous feminist, wrote books that not only supported this war against fascism, but also offered employers many tips on recruiting women.

Women responded, and repeatedly told interviewers that their motivation was both patriotic and personal—personal in the sense that they were working largely to bring home a husband or brother or son. Even though the pay was good and many women discovered that they enjoyed being in the labor force, the recruitment message that worked best was winning the war so that families could be reunited.

Some of those Oregon women who filled out registration cards said that they could not take industrial jobs, but would be interested in agricultural work during crop emergencies. Recruiters for the Women's Land Army targeted them, as well as college students who had summers available to work on farms. That recruitment, too, used radio: if local tomato fields were ripe and there was insufficient labor to pick them, Chambers of Commerce and similar organizations ran radio ads urging women to help and giving them instructions on how to be hired.

There also was specialized recruitment for "government girls," or young women with office skills who were willing to take federal jobs, especially in Washington, D.C. Recruitment for them was quite targeted, low profile, and conducted primarily in the Midwest, where schools were good, but educated women had few career paths in a largely agricultural economy. Recruiters simply talked with high school or business school teachers about who was a likely prospect, and then pitched the idea to the young woman and her parents. Tens of thousands of young women moved to Washington as a result.

Almost all "government girls" were white. The era remained one of profound racism, and black women rarely were targeted for recruitment. Indeed, many leaders of the WAC became convinced that its early acceptance of African-Americans damaged later recruitment with whites. The naval branches were much more racist: especially the SPARS and Women Marines avoided even accepting black women, let alone actively recruiting them. The Army Nurse Corps was less racist than the Navy Nurse Corps, but neither made a point of recruiting African Americans, even though there was a desperate need for nurses. The WAC, however, did run campaigns aimed at black women—an irony in view of the fact that it was the only corps commanded by a southerner, Oveta Culp Hobby of Texas. The same was true of other racial minorities: although there was recruitment of male Japanese-Americans, Native Americans, and, to a lesser extent, Latinos, rarely were women from those groups encouraged to participate in any war-related effort. To the extent that they enlisted, it was likely to be in the WAC.

Defense industries, too, kept recruitment of minority women low profile, but especially munitions plants encouraged word-of-mouth recruitment of black women. They developed a reputation for keeping cool under fire, and an African American, Anne Marie Young, earned the War Department's highest civilian decoration for her life-saving heroism when an arsenal exploded in Pine Bluff, Arkansas. Because radio stations that marketed to black audiences did not yet exist, most recruitment was done via organizations such as the National Council of Negro Women. Recruiting messages usually stressed the personal opportunity that the war presented—a chance to leave domestic service for better pay and possibilities.

Publications aimed at blacks also spread the word. *Opportunity: Journal of Negro Life* was the most consistent of such, but publicity also appeared in *Pulse*, *Brown American*,



and other magazines. Mary Anderson, Mary McLeod Bethune, and others used these as recruitment tools, as well as the pages of newspapers aimed at African Americans. The *Chicago Defender* and the *Pittsburgh Courier* were nationally circulated; Jesse Ellen Vann became publisher of the latter just before the war began.

As in the case of Anne Marie Young, both personnel managers and military recruiters looked for opportunities to grant honors and used this publicity to recruit others. Work attendance awards prevented absenteeism in defense jobs, and frequent ceremonies and parties created a sense of belonging for both military women and civilian “production soldiers.” Female role models were common at such events: nurses who were liberated from Bataan, for example, recruited women into the nurse corps; one was Lucy Wilson Joplin. Alleta Sullivan, who famously lost five sons in the war, toured for both Navy recruitment and defense productivity.

Finally, organizations ranging alphabetically from the American Women’s Voluntary Services to the YWCA recruited volunteers. Millions of women supported the Red Cross alone, giving their time, money, and, literally, their blood. Women were recruited to run conservation drives and bond sales campaigns; they recruited other women into work such as Bundles for Britain and Dogs for Defense. No matter where one looked or listened during World War II, the recruiting message was clear: there was “Work to be Done and a War to be Won.”

*See also:* **absenteeism; advertising; African-American women; Air WACs; American Women’s Voluntary Services; Army Nurse Corps; Anderson, Mary; Austin-Wadsworth Bill; bands, military; Bataan; Bethune, Mary McLeod; bond sales; boom towns; Bundles for Britain; Cadet Nurse Corps; conservation; Corregidor; decorations; Dogs for Defense; domestic workers; draft; Hobby, Oveta Culp; housework; labor force; magazines; Marines, Women; munitions; Navy Nurse Corps; nurses; Nurses Selective Service Act; Office of War Information; pay; radio; Red Cross; “Rosie the Riveter”; shipbuilding; “slander campaign”; SPARS; Sullivan, Alleta; volunteers; War Manpower Commission; WAVES; Women’s Army Corps; Women’s Land Army; YWCA**

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## RED CROSS

The American Red Cross began appreciably later than the International Red Cross. Famed American founder Clara Barton worked in supply procurement during the Civil War; after it, she began the world’s first systematic information exchange on the missing and dead. She went to Europe in 1869, where she heard of the International Committee of the Red Cross that had formed in Switzerland in 1863—but also discovered that State Department representatives there refused to cooperate with it. She nonetheless worked closely with the Red Cross during the 1870s Franco-Prussian War,

but Barton was not the iconic figure then that she has become, and she had difficulty persuading other Americans of its usefulness. After a decade of lobbying, the U.S. Senate ratified the treaty recognizing the Red Cross in 1882.

By then, it had a well-established headquarters in Geneva. The Spanish-American War and World War I reinforced the importance of a neutral international organization that aided war victims without regard to nationality, and by World War II, most Americans were so proud of Barton that many believed this nation had founded the Red Cross. Its logo alone was a major life-saver: if they bore the Red Cross, hospitals and vehicles that carried casualties were considered immune from attack.

Many ships and planes carrying the sick and wounded also carried war materiel, however, which meant that they were not entitled to display the Red Cross. That was the case for the war's first American female victims, the Red Cross nurses on the *Maasdam* and the *Vigrid*: both ships were sunk by German torpedoes prior U.S. entrance into the war. Germans did respect the Red Cross more than the Japanese, however: especially after U.S. involvement in the war, Japan bombed clearly marked hospitals and hospital ships. According to author Patricia Sewall, a male physician in the Pacific Theater of Operations said in May 1945: "We do not wear Red Cross insignia because they draw Japanese fire."

Despite such danger, more than sixty American women worked at Red Cross centers in England by the summer of 1941. The Red Cross did little to publicize their courage, though, because it feared that revealing the war's true peril would damage one of its chief priorities, the recruitment of desperately needed nurses. Even in peacetime, that had been a Red Cross mission: it held a semi-official status with the nurse corps of both the Army and the Navy, as well as the U.S. Public Health Service and the private American Nurse Association. Non-nursing women, some of them Americans, also worked for the Red Cross in Europe during this period, as another organizational purpose was assisting refugees. From the 1930s onwards, Red Cross headquarters in Switzerland offered a haven to people, especially Jews, who were prescient enough to leave their homelands before Hitler invaded. Throughout the war, Red Cross women specialized in relocating refugees and reconnecting separated families.

For example, when the women of the Army Nurse Corp who escaped from Bataan reached San Francisco in June of 1942, the Red Cross handled a massive number of people who wanted to question the nurses about what had happened in that tragic place—and specifically, if any of the ANC women knew what had happened to their loved one. According to Lieutenant Juanita Redmond, these inquirers "waited their turn in long lines," carrying photographs of the missing and fervently hoping for an answer. Usually, the nurses could not tell them anything, but sometimes they knew where a certain soldier last had been seen, or more somberly, that he had died despite their care. Red Cross workers assisted with this grievous task, and Redmond said that volunteer stenog-

raphers answered "stacks of letters" from families who could not travel to San Francisco.

The Philippine hospitals in which these nurses had worked were bombed, despite clearly marked Red Crosses. That was a violation of international standards by imperial Japan, but later in the war—as Japan came closer to losing—it did deliver Red Cross care packages to female prisoners of war in the Pacific. They were close to starvation by early 1944, and according to Lt. Eunice Young, "what saved many lives was the arrival of the Red Cross ship." The Japanese commandeered much of the bounty, but military nurses and the hundreds of civilian women impounded with them received kits containing medicines, vitamins, coffee, dried fruits, canned meat and butter, as well as the era's ubiquitous cigarettes. Young said that she and her bunkmate "stretched our kits for almost a year, allowing ourselves half a thin slice of canned meat each day ... We ate our last on Christmas Day."

Those kits were packed by volunteers, most of them women: about 3,500,000 women joined the American Red Cross during World War II, while another 10,000 were paid workers both at home and aboard. Among the Red Cross departments for which women volunteered were Production, which assembled such kits—along with surgical dressings and other essentials, especially knitted garments; the Home Service, which dealt with the problems of soldiers and their families, especially wives of servicemen; First Aid, which had a long history of educational training and disaster preparation; the Motor Corps, whose members ran errands and were available as emergency ambulance workers; and the new Blood Bank, whose volunteers were just beginning to realize how important their job was.

To deal with its longtime nurse-recruitment mission, the Red Cross created an eighty-hour course, complete with tests, that qualified volunteers (who were assumed to be women) for the duties of nurses aides in hospitals. This relieved overworked nurses, and a uniform (which had to be purchased by the unpaid aide) offered the opportunity to identify with the prestigious organization. The Red Cross also developed a course in home nursing that was intended to ease hospital overcrowding. Women apparently wanted to learn: these classes saw a 40 percent increase in the number of certificates awarded during 1941, while the nation still was at peace.

The Red Cross also had semi-official status with the Office of Civil Defense. Through both its classes and public service advertising, the Red Cross educated the public on preparation for bombing or other emergencies; especially its first aid courses took on an expanded importance because of the war. Its educational systems were so well developed, in fact, that other organizations used its curriculum to train their own volunteers. The American Women's Voluntary Services (AWVS), for example, required New York City members to take the Red Cross course in Advanced First Aid.

It was singularly innovative and respected in first aid as well as other areas, especially international immunity and blood donation, but the Red Cross Motor Corps was controversial. Although its ambulances and other vehicles



African-American Red Cross workers hand out doughnuts and coffee to tank personnel overseas. *Courtesy of American Red Cross*

could have been vital had the war worsened, many people believed that the primary reason for volunteering with this cause was to benefit from its gas ration. AWVS members were accused of this more frequently than Red Cross workers, but doubtless some women in both organizations saw this form of volunteering as particularly advantageous: it was easy, for example, to run by the grocery store while driving a Red Cross vehicle to a hospital. Other complaints focused on unnecessary duplication, especially Red Cross canteens that sometimes competed with the new USO, whose sole mission was wholesome recreation for soldiers.

Red Cross canteens, however, were the organizational effort most likely to be recognized by the millions of men in the armed forces. Its “Clubmobiles” became famous, especially in the European Theater of Operations, as trucks equipped for making coffee and hot doughnuts brought great comfort to battle-weary men. Clubmobiles were staffed by young women who never mentioned the menial work of dealing with doughnut grease and heavy mixes, but instead played American music on mobile phonographs and raised troop morale.

Other Red Cross women did their best to be cheerful even in the worst of circumstances. Mary Buffum Hamlin had a varied career: she not only worked in recreation, but also was attached to a hospital in North Africa and worked with refugees and prisoners of war; her clients called her “Miss Red Cross.” Another Red Cross worker, Margaret Utinsky, shortened her name to “Miss U;” she worked in the Pacific Theater of Operations and was briefly a prisoner of war. Indeed, she was one of the first people to come upon the scene of the Bataan death march, and she set up a hospital in a bombed-out church.

Perhaps the most unusual Red Cross employee was former Indiana Congresswoman Virginia Ellis Jenckes. A Democrat, she had been Indiana’s first female member of Congress when

she was elected from the Terre Haute area in 1932. After her 1938 defeat, Jenckes stayed in Washington and worked for the Red Cross for the rest of her life, including during World War II. In 1956, she would make international headlines when she helped five priests escape from Russian-occupied Hungary—at age seventy-nine.

The Red Cross called itself “The Big Sister to the Army,” and its volunteers also greeted troop trains with free food and drink, while countless fixed sites both at home and aboard offered refreshment and entertainment. Unfortunately, though, many women who volunteered in this work failed to acknowledge other women who were part of the military. Most female pilots in the WASP were akin to the one who told *Ladies Home Journal* that she “had to stand by at a hinterland airport while a group of Argentinian pilots ... ate all the Red Cross sandwiches because ... the sweet old ladies doling them out could [not] be convinced that I was in the Army Air Forces.” Mary Lee Settle, a Virginian who enlisted in the British military, also said that she felt unwelcome by Red Cross workers in London. Some historians, too, are critical. D’Ann Campbell said of the Red Cross during World War II:

Its elitist pretensions offended average Americans, while its disdain for its own volunteers relegated society women to make-work tasks. Blacks were outraged at its segregated blood policy. The Red Cross lost its important role in controlling nursing to the military nurse corps on the one hand, and the newly invigorated American Nurses’ Association on the other. Most damaging of all, the Red Cross had alienated its most important clients, the soldiers. They returned home with a highly negative view of the bureaucratic aloofness (and alleged promiscuity) of the agency’s staff.

Violet Kochendoefer may have been one of those of whom promiscuity was alleged: she clearly preferred the relative freedom of Red Cross employment to restrictions of military life. A Minnesota native, she took advantage of



the bureaucratic opportunity to leave the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps when it became the Women's Army Corps and instead joined the Red Cross, where she felt she could do more good. Although her life in liberated Paris and in occupied Germany was more comfortable than that of most WACs, her diary also showed that she was strongly affected by the misery of refugees and helped them as she could. Her assigned job, in fact, was making doughnuts, and she did that in bombed-out Bavaria, serving occupation soldiers for two years after the war ended.

On the other side of the world, Army nurse LaVonne Telshaw Camp had no complaints about her female friends in the Red Cross, and she knew from personal experience that their headquarters in Chungking was not luxurious. She had gone to this city, the capital of Nationalist China and home to Madame Chiang Kei-shek, on personal leave and "decided to check out the Red Cross and see if they had any billeting:"

I was offered a room, no questions asked. I put on my night clothes and climbed onto the mattress, a cotton sack filled with straw. I didn't mind that; after all, I was by this time accustomed to the dearth of physical comforts in the Far East ... No sooner than had found just the right spot and prepared to drift off into blissful slumber when the first biting insect tasted my warm blood. Before I knew it, the fleas were eating me alive.

Red Cross women did not live luxuriously, and although doughnuts may have symbolized the organization to men overseas, their women back home women had different needs and views. They were likely to identify with the Home Service Department of the Red Cross. This entity might well be called a giant network of social workers, paid and unpaid, who sorted out complex personal problems. In Worcester, Massachusetts, for example—an inland town relatively unaffected by the war—the Red Cross handled fifteen hundred cases per month during the war's last year. Civilians sought help with the military's monetary allotments for soldiers' families, and they needed assistance with veterans' benefits, especially for those who had been disabled. Although these problems related more directly to the War Department or Veterans Administration or other agencies, Red Cross intervention often was essential to filling out the right form and getting attention.

As Red Cross social worker Rose Rabinoff explained, "the absence of the family breadwinner has meant real hardships to many families. Households have had to be combined ... even aged parents have taken jobs again." In response to letters telling about such troubles at home, "some soldiers have left their posts without leave"—thereby making criminals of themselves and creating still another problem. Rabinoff blamed most difficulties on "emotionally immature" wives accustomed to "leaning heavily on their husbands." Their "bewilderment and fear of being left to manage alone" was too much, and they ran to the Red Cross as to a big sister. The organization's workers had to try to teach such women to manage alone—and to deal with much more somber reality.

More than once, for example, Red Cross workers uncovered cases of bigamy when a soldier's second wife applied for his allotment money.

The Red Cross also worked with war brides who married soldiers overseas, easing the transition from war refugee to American citizen. It tracked down soldiers to tell them of family emergencies, although it had no power to allow men to come home even when a child had died. It often was the Red Cross that tried to find the missing, both civilian and military, and Red Cross workers held family hands when a soldier was killed. It worked with the military to explain the circumstances, and when it was possible, its workers assisted in bringing bodies home, arranged funerals, and represented the nation at them.

Overall, the organization's most important mission may have been to teach endurance. That was true for Mary Schiek Sargent, who served with the American Red Cross in India. Severely injured when an army truck overturned, she said of her thought process at this time:

I burned with fever..., [but] I could handle this the way I handled the dreadful hospital in the desert—in tiny bits. You can stand almost anything for fifteen minutes ... And after the first fifteen minutes, you say to yourself, "Well, I lived through that, now I will try the next fifteen minutes."

Fifteen minutes at a time for years, the Red Cross eased pain of all sorts. Although most of a century would pass before another woman followed Clara Barton as its head, literally millions of women gave their time, money, and expertise as its "volunteers for victory."

**See also:** advertising; allotments; American Nurses' Association; American Women's Voluntary Services; Army Nurse Corps; Bataan; cigarettes; Civil Defense; fatalities; European Theater of Operation; hospitals; letters; *Maasdam*; motor pools; North Africa; Pearl Harbor; nursing; Pacific Theater of Operation; prisoners of war; rationing; recreation; recruitment; refugees; uniforms; USO; volunteers; war brides; WASP; wives of servicemen

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## REFUGEES

When World War II ended in 1945, about ten million Europeans were homeless. They were living as refugees, displaced from homes that had been destroyed, or worse, as prisoners of war and/or slave laborers—and that count did not include many millions more in Asia. Of this tremendous number, President Harry S. Truman allowed forty thousand to enter the United States by executive order in 1945, but Congress did not reform immigration law to increase quotas for war victims until 1948—when the number of displaced persons actually had increased. Finally, in 1950, the House of Representatives issued a report defining the problem:

The Second World War and events taking place in its aftermath resulted in the greatest dislocation of population ever recorded in history ... From September 1, 1939 to the end of 1947, between 30 and 40 million people were moved from their homelands to other areas of Europe and Asia. Great numbers of these people were forced to move as a part of the Nazi program of slave labor ... After a long nightmare of despair, millions of people, liberated at war's end from prison-of-war stockades, slave-labor enclosures, and concentration camps, became the responsibility of the Allied armies ...

The vast majority of these people had but one common goal to return to their homelands ... However, the war had caused far-reaching changes in the political and social structure of many of the countries of origin of the displaced persons. Regimes had been changed, boundaries had been redrawn ... Many of the displaced persons had to face the prospect of changed citizenship; many more had to face political and religious persecution if they returned to their homes.

Most had no homes to which to return: not only had they been ravaged by bombs and fires, governments had confiscated the personal and business property of most exiles; especially surviving Jews found, if they managed to make it home, that all of their worldly goods had been stolen or destroyed. Nor was it "home" in the sense of loved ones, as locating the millions of missing was the chief desire of refugees—and a massive task, one in which Red Cross and YWCA women excelled. Finding new homes in an America that had become reluctant to accept immigrants was another heartbreaking problem: the Great Depression of the 1930s convinced most Americans to slam shut the "Golden Door" that had welcomed immigrants a generation earlier. Xenophobia had been evident even before the war, as State Department officials turned away shiploads of refugees fleeing fascism.

Henrietta Szold probably was America's most prominent women in protesting this prewar indifference and drawing attention to the coming Holocaust. Baltimore-born, she had founded Hadassah in 1912 and spent the 1930s and 1940s working from what then was Palestine, especially rescuing young Jews through her Youth Ailyah program. Aside from Jewish women, activist organizations for prewar refugees were the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom and Quaker women involved with the Friends Services Committee. Despite pleas from them, intellectuals such as Dorothy Thompson, and others, the perilous situation of prewar refugees went largely ignored.

If they could manage it, desperate women in Europe used what was called the "kindertransport" to send their children away to safety in Jewish homes in allied nations, or to boarding schools or any place that would take them in neutral Sweden and Switzerland, or even to ostensibly neutral but actually pro-fascist Spain and Portugal. Some mothers made the religious sacrifice to hide children in convents with co-operative Catholic nuns, especially in Belgium and Holland. Many children survived the Holocaust because their mothers

not only were prescient, but also willing to cut family ties so that the young could live.

Most refugees tried to reach Britain, the only European democracy still standing by mid-1940. That overcrowded nation was fighting for its life—and evacuating its own children to Canada, Australia, and elsewhere. Britons understandably did not always welcome refugees who would consume its rationed resources, but they had no choice but to accept many, including exiled governmental leaders: Daisy Harriman, U.S. ambassador to Norway, for example, led members of its royal family to safety there. Refugees in London repaid their debt with important intelligence for allied spies on the places they fled. When the United States entered the war, some American women also worked with them in Britain, both for intelligence information and as employees of the Red Cross and other organizations.

According to oral historian Sally Hayton-Keeva, Hanna Voight joined the Red Cross for more complex reasons. A German who later became an American citizen, she was married to a Nazi officer but did not share his political views. She took advantage of his absence to help refugees—yet apparently remained unaware that the “evacuees” she assisted probably were on their way to concentration camps. She said:

I decided to help the Red Cross, which made it easier to refuse to join the Nazi party. Many German women who lived along the French border were being evacuated and they didn't want to leave their homes, so many of them had to be taken to the train by force. Pregnant women and women with babies were evacuated first and they would pass through on cattle cars and stop at our station.

Many times the train would pull out and we would find babies lying on the ground where their mothers had thrown them out because they couldn't care for them or thought they were better off dead. Many women would throw themselves off the train while it was moving. I helped care for the babies that lived—I sometimes had six or eight or them in my house—and I would help women give birth in those dirty cattle cars.

This was early in the war, and many Americans were sufficiently aware of such forced “evacuations” that something could have been done. Publisher Freda Kirchwey was among other women who tried to inform the public: in an editorial early in 1943, she wrote in the past tense, saying that if the United States had modified its “quotas and visas and affidavits and a thick layer of prejudice,” then “the two million lying today in the earth of Poland ... would be alive and safe.” Eleanor Roosevelt repeatedly called her husband's attention to the issue, but he did not appoint his War Refugee Board until January 22, 1944—and then it did little, even failing to utilize refugees who would have been enthusiastic workers in defense industries. According to historian Herbert Druks, as late as August of 1944, or about a year prior to the war's end:

982 displaced persons, representing seventeen nationalities, arrived in New York City after a difficult journey

on board a U.S. Navy ship ... Once they arrived in Fort Ontario, Oswego, New York, they were kept under strict military surveillance. They were almost as closely guarded as the German prisoners of war. They had traveled across the Atlantic to find liberty, but all they found was eighteen months of confinement.

Hitler targeted not only the six million Jews who died, but also gypsies, homosexuals, labor leaders and other leftists, and anyone considered a “defect” for the “master race.” He had made his philosophy so clear during the 1930s that, according to historian Kleine-Ahlbrandt, “a majority of Germany's roughly half a million Jews had left by 1938.” Because Germans Jews were much more sophisticated and aware than those in eastern Europe, the vast majority of genocide victims came after Nazi occupation of Hungary, Poland, and other Slavic nations. Non-Jews in eastern Europe also suffered at the war's end, when these countries were taken over by Russian allies on their way to crush the German capital of Berlin—and Russians often were similar in their contempt for Jews, and even for other Slavs.

Thus a Latvian or Bulgarian refugee who had managed to survive slave labor in Germany, for example, would not be eager to return to her home, which now was controlled by Soviet puppets. Nor would she be welcome in other parts of devastated Europe or the United States. Some such women were in displaced person facilities for years; they married and had children while living in compounds not so very different from wartime concentration camps. Social workers, usually women, helped them relocate, but if their aim was the United States, refugees often first had to accept residency elsewhere, especially South America, and wait for entry to the United States under that nation's immigration quota.

For example, after the Nazis arrested the male head of the Serbian Popov family for listening to non-German radio news, the family spent more than a decade as refugees, living first in an Italian displaced persons camp and then in Peru before they finally could come to New York. Most of the twenty-six Jewish women whose stories are told by North Carolina historian Lixl-Purcell became American citizens after similar distress: all escaped from prewar Germany and Austria to nations as diverse as Ecuador, Australia, and even Japan. They were widows and other unmarried women, and most lived in hiding before undertaking their perilous individual global odysseys.

The most important factor in whether or not refugees could eventually enter the United States was education, especially in science. The country welcomed such famous men as Germany's Albert Einstein and Italy's Enrico Fermi, who led the Manhattan Project that culminated in the atomic bomb, and many women also managed this leap. The most famous scientist was Maria Goeppert Mayer, who arrived in the United States in 1930 and won the Nobel Prize for physics in 1963. Mathematician Emmy Noether was rescued by the Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced German Scholars in 1933 and worked with Einstein, but died prematurely in 1935.





A Red Cross nurse explains medicine to refugees from Eastern Europe. *Courtesy of American Red Cross*

Political scientist Hannah Arendt fled Germany for Paris in 1934 and then, after Germany occupied France, managed to get to the United States in 1941. Arendt has become a profound influence on American thought, especially with her *Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951). Lucy Dawidowicz was similar, except that she actually was born in New York. A twenty-four-year-old student at its Yeshiva University, she went to Poland to study Jewish history there—and left less than a week before the September invasion that began World War II in Europe. After the war's 1945 end, Dawidowicz returned to Poland and worked with Holocaust survivors. She published numerous books and also took the lead on restoring the devastated Vilna Scientific Institute.

Not all of the intellectual migrants were scientists or Jews: among them was Sigrid Undset, a Norwegian who had won the Nobel Prize for literature in 1928. When Germany overran Norway in 1940, she escaped via Russia and Japan to reach America just a year prior to war between Japan and the United States. Undset spent the war in the United States, wrote *Return to the Future* (1942), and returned to Norway in 1945. Another such refugee author was Alma Mahler-Werfel; her first and second husbands were composer Gustav Mahler and architect Walter Gropius. With her third, Franz Werfel, she fled to France in 1938 and went on to the United States in 1940, where she wrote *And the Bridge is Love* (1958).

Mental health was the profession most affected by this influx of women too brilliant to live with fascism. The leading female exiles in this field were Karen Horney, a famous psychoanalyst who left Berlin in 1932, and Helene Deutsch; born in Poland, she founded the Vienna Psychoanalytic Institute, left it behind in 1933, and wrote *Psychology of Women* in 1944. Others were psychoanalyst Frieda Fromm-Reichmann, who left Frankfurt in 1935; psychologist Herta Hertzog, who came from Vienna in 1935; Munich's Charlotte Buhler, a psychologist who arrived in the United States via Norway in 1940; and Marie Johoda, another Viennese psychologist

who came via England and worked in mental health for the American Jewish Committee in the postwar era.

Postwar reality meant that many citizens of former enemy nations also became refugees. German and Italian cities were reduced to rubble, and most were near starvation when American troops arrived. Women's Army Corps member Violet Kochendoefer, one of the first to arrive in Germany in April 1945, wrote of serving soup to political prisoners—some of them women with babies—who had been slave laborers:

In the following days we had more time to talk with the DP [displaced persons] and see them as individuals. I found myself speaking German in a way I didn't realize I could ... Many begged us to help them find their families, or wanted to know where they were and how long it would take them to get home. One man haughtily insisted that he was a Dutch ambassador and should receive special treatment. A frail, tiny old woman stopped the whole line one evening when she fell to her knees, took my hands in both of hers, and sobbed in German that she would never forget us and our wonderful food.

As bad as conditions were in the European Theater of War, though, they were worse in the Pacific. There, most refugees held no hope of ever emigrating: Congress did not repeal the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act until 1943, midway through the war, even though China was a vital ally against Japan. Refugees there both began earlier and lasted longer—and some were American women. During "the Rape of Nanking," when Japan attacked that coastal China city in 1937, thousands of Chinese children, women, and men were killed in deliberately cruel ways, and many women were repeatedly raped. American women later were able to testify to the atrocities they witnessed: among them was Navy nurse Page Cooper, who saw a Japanese soldier smother an infant to make his rape of the mother less troublesome.

Perhaps because white women were physically bigger than most Japanese men and probably because Japan was not yet

at war with the West, there were no gang rapes of non-Asian women—but as Japanese bombs continued to fall on Singapore, Shanghai, and elsewhere, more Westerners became refugees. Thousands of women and children joined civilian men at crowded docks, frantically trying to get away on crowded ships bound for a dangerous Pacific. A few brave souls set out on their own, and one, Mrs. Lester Peterson, endured long days in a rowboat with three men before rescue. Ogla Greenlaw's memoirs told of escaping from China via India. Being well-connected did not necessarily help: one refugee was the niece of former president Theodore Roosevelt; like the first lady, her name was Eleanor Roosevelt, and she wrote of living through the terror of Japanese invasion. Alice Clarke lived in the Philippines, not mainland Asia, and had resigned from the peacetime Army Nurse Corps (ANC) when she married an American in the lumbering business on the island of Mindanao. She later wrote:

We lived in fear of capture..., while the Japanese overran the island ... I was the only white woman, but I had the companionship of Filipino women ... Our luck didn't last! We were found by a Japanese patrol and taken to an internment camp...

One night they ... literally threw us on a ship ... and bought us to our own home ... We were bewildered..., but discovered [it was] because Bill had operated the lumber mill and the Japs wanted [it] ... We were kept under the constant surveillance of guards.

During the following months, we planned ... escape into the hills again ... Another Japanese military operation was in progress, and ... we made our flight, taking just the things we could carry ... [For] the next year we wandered through the hills, hiding in caves, in old native nipa huts, sleeping on the ground ... Bill made a radio..., and with the help of the indomitable Free Filipino Fighters..., we started on the road to Australia.

Young Frances Long and her Shanghai schoolmate Jessie Mann escaped from coastal China relatively easily; they went (separately) to the Philippines, where both found jobs with U.S. Navy intelligence. After Japan invaded Manila at Christmas of 1941, they were imprisoned at Santo Tomas, a college converted to a prisoner-of-war camp. Bombs from both American and Japanese planes terrified them, but Long wrote: "On June 4 [1942], as Jessie and I were going down to dinner, I was called to the commandant's office ... and told that I would leave Santo Tomas for Shanghai early the next morning with one other evacuee, Jennifer White, an AP correspondent. If I told anybody about my departure, I would be punished."

Long's release doubtless was due to her father's diplomatic status, and in August, she was able to go from Shanghai to New York—but her friend Jessie Mann was left behind. In addition to reporter Jennifer White, Long's report in *Life* mentioned Shelley and Carl Mydens, correspondents for *Life* also trapped in Manila. In the foreword to her 1945 book, Mydens described Santo Tomas as:

like the dozen other civilian camps in Japanese-occupied territories ... Thirty-five hundred people are living there as this book is written. Most of them are Americans; some are British, Dutch, Polish, South American. They are men and women and children. Their ages run from a few months to seventy-five years. They are businessmen who built their lives in the Far East [and] refugees headed home to America from the war in China ...

Carl and I were interned with these people when the Japanese entered Manila in January 1942. We lived with them in Santo Tomas for eight and one half months. Then we were transferred by the Japanese to Shanghai and interned again ... We were among the fifteen hundred out of fifteen thousand civilian prisoners of the Japanese whose luck was good; we came home to America on the ... *Gripsholm*.

Dorothy Davis, who was "born and reared in Shanghai," also came home on the *Gripsholm*. One of sixty women who had been civilian nurses in the Far East, she too wrote about her experience at Santo Tomas. That place, and especially the military nurses interned there after the fall of Bataan and Corregidor, got vastly more attention both then and now than other Pacific refugees. Of the estimated fifteen thousand Westerners confined by the Japanese, fewer than one hundred were American military nurses, but they have received by far the majority of recent scholarship—probably because military records make for easier historical research. Relatively little has been written expressly on the much larger number of civilian women imprisoned with them and at the other camps to which Mydens referred.

Worse, what little military women wrote at the time about their civilian sisters often was dismissive and disdainful. Lt. Eunice Young, for example, said that she and other Army nurses "fumed" at having to treat civilians. Her resentment probably was rooted in the military's well-defined ranks, which enforced near-equality among nurses—while some civilians attempted to maintain class status. Young continued:

Some internees moved in with spring mattresses, plush chairs, and had arranged with Filipino houseboys to deliver more food regularly. Some of the women brought evening dresses. Another, with more sense, had brought a sewing machine. Some came with money, others without. Many arrived with only what they were wearing.

Although some refugees were thoughtless enough to bring evening gowns, their internment arguably was harder than that of military women: they had no official protector as did the nurses of the Army and Navy. Civilian women were refugees in the truest sense—and had no hope of the back pay that was accumulating for military women. Most also were burdened with children. Indeed, Young later said, "the Japs discovered that about twenty of the women in the camp were pregnant. They were furious, rounded up all the husbands involved..., and herd[ed] them into jail. The women sat alone in the nipa huts."

Annalee Jacoby, another civilian at Santo Tomas, also was

a *Life* correspondent. Her report, published in June of 1942 after she was returned to the United States, also featured the nurses, who technically were prisoners of war, while ignoring the civilians, who were merely refugees. And three years later, when these detainees finally were liberated, those in the military would systematically fly to safety and win decorations for their valor—while other refugees remained “displaced persons.”

**See also:** Bataan; Chinese-American women; Corregidor; European Theater of Operations; food shortages; Harri-man, Daisy; Jewish-American women; Kirchwey, Freda; Manhattan Project; military intelligence; occupied Germany; prisoners of war; radio; rationing; Pacific Theater of Operations; postwar; Red Cross; Roosevelt, Eleanor; spies; Thompson, Dorothy; United Nations; Women's International League for Peace and Freedom; YWCA

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### ROGERS, REPRESENTATIVE EDITH NOURSE (1881–1960)

The mother of the Women's Army Corps (WAC), Edith Nourse Rogers' career would not have been predictable from her privileged upbringing. After European finishing schools, Edith Nourse married Harvard-educated attorney John Jacob Rogers in 1907; they settled in Lowell, Massachusetts, and he was elected to Congress in 1912. World War I showed her the need for upper-class women to volunteer, and Rogers even went to Europe on behalf of the suffrage-related Women's Overseas Service League. There she saw the greater involvement of British women, a model she never forgot.

Although she was not a very active Republican, Rogers was chosen as secretary of the Electoral College when Republicans won the 1924 presidential election—and thus became the first woman to announce that official vote. A similarly stereotyped honor was bestowed on her the next year, when her husband died in office and Massachusetts Republicans arranged for her to win the special election to replace him. They expected her only to hold the seat until the 1926 election—and were surprised when a newly assertive Rogers ran and won on her own. Then age forty-four and childless, she discovered that she liked public service and would go on to win the next seventeen elections.

Her honesty, concern for her constituents, and selflessness made Rogers very popular, even with Democrats and the





Representative Edith Nourse Rogers (R-MA), in civilian clothing, was considered the mother of the Women's Army Corps. She is visiting Fort Devons, Massachusetts, which was very briefly a training camp for the early corps. *Courtesy of Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

stronger unions that developed in her industrial district during the New Deal of the 1930s. Following up on her World War I determination, she served on the House Veterans Affairs Committee from its 1929 beginning—and developed enough seniority that she chaired the committee when Republicans controlled the House. Rogers also won appointment to the prestigious House Foreign Affairs Committee, and like her colleague Florence Kahn, she used these positions to bring many federal benefits to her district, especially after the war began. It is indicative of her abilities that foreign policy and veterans issues long had been an exclusively male domain, but both her colleagues and other men treated her with the respect that she merited.

Of greater importance to women, however, was the attention that Rogers gave to professionalizing women's formerly volunteer wartime roles. Following up on her observations from World War I, she said on the House floor on March 17, 1942, that an army women's unit "would make available ... the work of many women who cannot afford to give their services without compensation ... From the hundreds of letters I have received since introducing the bill, "the *Congressional Record* continued, "it is clearly evident to me that the women of America are eager and anxious to do their part."

She had introduced her bill to add non-nursing women to the Army in May of 1941, but it was ignored until after Pearl Harbor—and when Congress did take it up in the spring of 1942, debate was heated. Rogers exhibited great parliamentary skill—but the real work had been back in the bill's drafting stages, when she answered endless questions about Britain's model and slowly maneuvered War Department men into realizing that they needed female recruits. The bill marked a historic change in the status of women, and the margin by which it passed the House—249 to 86—reflected the willingness of her colleagues to follow her lead.

Rogers, of course, also was the congressional sponsor when it became clear that auxiliary status had been a mistake; she drafted the legislation to transform the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC) to the WAC and explained why these seeming technicalities needed congressional attention. Her sense of commitment showed again during the "slander campaign" that simultaneously accused WACs of lesbianism and illegitimate pregnancies. She insisted on a full investigation, and when the rumors proved false, demanded that the media issue retractions. She visited troops abroad and spent interminable hours on issues that did not directly relate to her constituency. As the war neared its end, her tenure on the Veterans Affairs Committee played a major role in the GI Bill, arguably the most important domestic legislation of the century.

The only unpleasant aspect of her career occurred in 1949, when the wife of a longtime aide unsuccessfully tried to include Rogers as a third party in their divorce. He continued to work for Rogers, however, and although they never married, she left her Maine vacation home to him when she died about a decade later.

Death came suddenly—in the midst of a re-election campaign at age seventy-nine. Without intending to end her career, Edith Nourse Rogers already had set a record for female longevity in Congress. No other woman has yet equaled her total of forty-five years. Born rich, she nonetheless spent her life working for others, and military women especially owe her a deep debt.

*See also:* **British women; divorce; GI Bill; Kahn, Florence, lesbianism; pregnancy; "slander campaign"; veterans; volunteers; Women's Army Corps**

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## ROOSEVELT, ANNA ELEANOR (1884–1962)

Called “Mother to a Generation,” Eleanor Roosevelt’s importance to American history can be seen simply in the number of books about her: at least a hundred have been published since her death, or an approximate average of two per year—and yet her life was so encompassing that the books continue to roll off the press. Repeated polls have named America’s longtime first lady as world’s most influential twentieth-century woman.

Anna Eleanor Roosevelt was born with that name; when she married her distant cousin Franklin, her name remained Roosevelt. The family was wealthy but dysfunctional, and she had a painful childhood. Her mother, Anna Hall Roosevelt, died young; her alcoholic father, whom she adored, died a few years later; and her maternal grandmother made her life miserable with attacks on her self-esteem. Timid and awkward, she believed that she compared badly with other girls, especially her brilliant and beautiful cousin, future Republican socialite Alice Roosevelt Longworth. Yet Eleanor’s happiest days were vacations with her father’s family, and she was particularly fond of her Uncle Teddy—Alice’s father and the future president.

There was alcoholism in the Hall family, too, and young Eleanor lived in fear of embarrassment from uncles who shared the family’s New York City mansion. Like other girls of old wealth in her era, she was educated at home by governesses. Her three years at a London finishing school were happier, and the politically liberal French women who headed her school became her first positive role models. Still, she returned home as a conservative, ready for her debut and upper-class life; although she briefly taught dance and exercise classes at a settlement house for immigrants, she had no thought of a career.

Despite her conviction that she was unattractive, photos of the era show her to be a tall, pleasant-looking young woman

with a lithe figure. She had beaux, and her marriage was not arranged by anyone other than the couple themselves. Because he was handsome, socially-skilled, and Harvard-educated, Franklin’s choice of Eleanor seems only to be explained by genuine feeling. They married in 1905, during his first year of law school at Columbia University, and President Theodore Roosevelt gave away the bride.

After an extended European honeymoon, they settled in New York City. While Franklin established his career, she bore their children—an average of one every other year during the first decade of their marriage. The first, born in 1906, was their only daughter; she was called Anna, her mother’s unused first name. Five sons followed, with the third dying young; the last was born in 1916, after the Roosevelts had moved to Washington.

Burdened with an insensitive grandmother in her youth, Eleanor Roosevelt also suffered a tyrannical mother-in-law. The pattern was easily established, as Eleanor was almost constantly pregnant or in postpartum recovery, while Sara Delano Roosevelt was a dominant personality who used her control of Franklin’s money to establish herself as family matriarch. She treated Eleanor like a child, overruling her decisions and belittling her even in front of servants. Their grandmother spoiled the children inexcusably, buying them expensive presents and undoing their parents’ attempts at discipline. A political and social reactionary, Sara Delano Roosevelt spent her life trying to return to nineteenth-century privilege; she especially objected to Eleanor’s slight involvement with settlement house and other charitable work—even though Eleanor remained conventional enough that she opposed women’s right to vote.

Franklin, however, went his own way as a reformist Democrat, and Sara Roosevelt was as indulgent with him as she was with her grandsons. He was elected to the New York Senate in 1910, just five years after their wedding, but Eleanor was so trained to timidity that she hated obligatory



Eleanor Roosevelt and Oveta Culp Hobby visiting members of the Women’s Army Corps in the European Theater of Operations. Note the role reversal of a male cook.  
*Courtesy of Franklin D. Roosevelt Library; Hyde Park, NY*

political appearances. When Democrat Woodrow Wilson became president in 1913, Franklin was able to combine his political goals with his interest in the sea; Wilson appointed him assistant secretary of the Navy, and the family moved to Washington. This new locale was unfamiliar territory to Sara Roosevelt, and Eleanor began to blossom.

Like other women of the era, World War I was liberating for her, as she was able to leave her one-year-old at home and find personal identity in wartime activity that also was respectable volunteerism. She worked long hours at hospitals, doing tangible good for soldiers while also boosting her self-esteem and learning administrative skills. Still, she remained so politically unsophisticated that when a newspaper interviewer asked about coping with wartime food shortages, she replied that her staff of ten household servants was managing just fine.

Franklin Roosevelt made a huge career leap in 1920, moving from an assistant secretaryship to vice-presidential nominee. Democrats were in retreat that year, however, and the ticket was easily defeated. As the mother of still young children, Eleanor Roosevelt was excused from most campaigning and did not enjoy what little she did. Her life changed the following year, however, when Franklin was stricken with polio: confined to a wheelchair, he began to depend on her as “his eyes and ears.” His political advisor, Louie Howe, also served as her mentor, and she became active in the new League of Women Voters, Democratic Women’s Clubs, the Women’s Trade Union League, and other reformist organizations.

Influenced by astute women such as Molly Dewson, she learned political strategy in the successful 1924 campaign of New York Governor Al Smith—against her cousin, Republican Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. In the 1928 election, Franklin Roosevelt replaced Al Smith as governor, and four years following that, he was elected president of the United States in a landslide. It was a meteoric rise, and a good deal of the credit went to his wife’s recently discovered political skill. She worked tirelessly, traveled thousands of miles every year, and, in 1936, the Roosevelt administration was re-elected by the biggest margin in history, losing just two of the then-forty-eight states. She received unprecedented amounts of mail, especially during the Great Depression, when most Americans saw her as a maternal figure who was truly interested in their personal problems. Women especially wrote to her, and her office was in daily contact with Ellen Woodward, who headed New Deal programs aimed at working women.

The assistance that she rendered to African Americans brought hate mail. She repeatedly publicized their impoverishment and mistreatment, and although her motives were empathetic, not political, she was largely responsible for turning this voting bloc away from its historic Republicanism (because Republicans had been “the party of Lincoln.”) She ignored vitriolic objections from white Southern Democrats and did such things as fly with Tuskegee Airmen, pioneer black (male) pilots. In Birmingham, Alabama, she refused to sit on either the “white” or “colored” side of an aisle and instead called for a chair to sit in the middle. She intervened

on behalf of author Lillian Smith when the white Georgian’s work on race was censored by the post office. Nor did she ignore poor whites; Roosevelt especially promoted artisans in Appalachia and elsewhere.

She held the first press conferences given by a first lady, something that offered female journalists important access: among the reporters who benefited were Doris Fleenon, Martha Gellhorn, Anne O’Hare McCormick, and especially her close friend Lorena Hickok. She sometimes spent weekends at the country estate of newspaper publisher Cissy Patterson, and, in addition to *My Day*, the syndicated column that she began in 1936, wrote for *Ladies Home Journal*, *McCall’s*, and other magazines aimed at women, including the publication of *Business & Professional Women*, *Independent Woman*. She joined a union, the American Newspaper Guild, and despite unkind remarks about her voice, also conducted a radio show.

Nor was this level of communication intended to be self-serving, as Roosevelt regularly promoted the careers of countless women. Among the most notable were businesswomen Genevieve Herrick and Margaret Hickey, as well as labor leaders such as Mary Anderson and Rose Schneiderman. She pushed her husband to name the nation’s first female ambassadors, Ruth Bryan Owen and Daisy Harriman, and its first female Cabinet member, Frances Perkins. She helped bring Jewish women into the mainstream of American life, including Anna Rosenberg, and befriended Mary McLeod Bethune, Crystal Bird Fauset, and other African-American women. Her friendships with congresswomen were not limited to Democrats, as she embraced Republicans Frances Bolton, Edith Nourse Rogers, and Margaret Chase Smith, along with Democrats such as Mary T. Norton and Helen Gahagan Douglas.

Roosevelt enjoyed the company of intelligent women and was a genius at networking: so much so, that according to historian Joseph Lash, Ambassador Joseph Kennedy complained that the first lady was always sending him notes “to have some little Suzie Glotz to tea at the embassy.” Such assertiveness challenged the foundation of the conservative world, and endless commentators—usually male—scorned Roosevelt in print and on radio. They ridiculed not only her ideas, but also her toothy smile, stout figure, dowdy dress, and arrogant children. The First Lady and her causes were regularly labeled “communistic,” but, ultimately, the charges against her were so obviously unfair that even most Republicans repudiated her worst malinger, newspaper columnist Westbrook Pegler.

The intensity of criticism lessened as she proved herself anew in World War II. Roosevelt’s internationalist roots dated to peace initiatives in the 1920s, and she spoke out against fascism in Spain’s civil war of the 1930s. She drew the president’s attention to anti-fascist warnings by Dorothy Thompson and others, and earlier than most, she cried out against the mistreatment of European Jews. Although both her husband and the public failed to heed this message as strongly as was needed, Roosevelt earned more credit for her



war work with soldiers. Coded named "Rover," she traveled to all fronts as soon as the military permitted, again acting as "eyes and ears." Many wartime White House briefings began with the president saying, "My Missus says ..."

The war killed Franklin Roosevelt as much as any combatant, as the growing strain appears in his photos. He died just weeks before V-E Day, and many women mentioned his death in their recollections of victory in Europe. The blow became even more traumatic for the first lady when she discovered that her husband of forty years had died in the company of her long-ago social secretary, Lucy Mercer Rutherford. A sense of duty was always Roosevelt's strongest motivation, however, and because the nation also was in mourning, she hid her hurt and accompanied the funeral train from Warm Springs, Georgia, the winter home where FDR died, to their estate in Hyde Park, New York. Even in the middle of the night, tens of thousands lined railroad tracks to pay their respects to the only president and first lady many had ever known.

She intended to retire to a cottage in Hyde Park's woods, but President Harry Truman had other ideas and insisted that she accept appointment to the new United Nations. Serving in the UN reinforced Roosevelt's feminism. She lamented the absence of women in most delegations and the obtuse behavior of many men: she wrote in her autobiography, for example: "I notice that men always feel very passionately about rules." When work in London was postponed for an excursion to Paris, she commented, "the boys, no matter what age, can't resist a good time." Working closely with such unenlightened men, she began reconsidering her longtime opposition to the Equal Rights Amendment, which she had opposed because it would nullify protective labor laws for women. When she realized that "all men are created equal" would be taken literally, she worked for gender-neutral language in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, perhaps the greatest of her many achievements.

Her UN service ended with the 1952 election of Republican Dwight Eisenhower, but Roosevelt remained active. Her personal life was saddened by quarrels between her sons and her first experience of a reduction in financial status, but she set such personal grief aside to continue her public crusades. She supported the new state of Israel, spoke out against the era's witch-hunts of "communists," and campaigned for Democratic presidential nominee Adlai Stevenson in 1952 and 1956. She continued to write, and at age seventy-five, began teaching at Massachusetts' new Brandeis University, a Jewish institution; she commuted by train and faithfully met her classes. After learning she could charge large fees that she could donate to charities, she also began television appearances. She even found time to write on how to maintain this energy level.

When Democrats retook the White House in 1960, President John F. Kennedy appointed Roosevelt to chair his new Commission on the Status of Women. She worked for the Equal Pay Act that Congress passed in the year after her death, but was increasingly ill. Finally hospitalized for a rare form of tuberculosis, she did not want her life prolonged; because she

did not wish to be seen as anything other than the activist she was, she barred most visitors. Eleanor Roosevelt celebrated her seventy-eighth birthday with a party for children only; she died in her New York City apartment a few weeks later and was buried at Hyde Park.

Among the many books she left are: *This is My Story* (1937), *My Days* (1938), *The Moral Basis of Democracy* (1940), *This I Remember* (1949), *On My Own* (1948), *India and the Awakening East* (1953), *You Learn By Living* (1960), and *Autobiography* (1961). *Ladies of Courage* (1956), which she co-wrote with Lorena Hickok, may be her most useful book for politically active feminists.

*See also:* **Anderson, Mary; Bethune, Mary McLeod; Bolton, Frances; Business & Professional Women; Dewson, Molly; Douglas, Helen Gahagan; Equal Rights Amendment; Fleeson, Doris; Gellhorn, Martha; Harri-man, Daisy; Herrick, Elinore; Hickey, Margaret; Hickok, Lorena; League of Women Voters; McCormick, Anne O'Hare; Norton, Mary; Perkins, Frances; radio; Rogers, Edith Nourse; Rosenberg, Anna; Smith, Margaret Chase; Thompson, Dorothy; United Nations; V-E Day**

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## ROSENBERG, ANNA MARIE LEDERER (1902–1983)

For more than a half-century, Anna Rosenberg was the only woman to have served at the level of assistant secretary of defense. During a supposedly regressive postwar era, President Harry Truman appointed her in 1950 at the direct request of Defense Secretary George C. Marshall, who had observed her work during World War II.

A pioneer of public relations, she was a highly paid consultant specializing in labor issues prior to the war. Her skills in negotiation and diplomacy were such that, in Eleanor Roosevelt's words, Rosenberg "could stop fights

before they started." President Franklin Roosevelt used these abilities during the war by making her a special assistant; she traveled without rank or title and reported back to him on the conditions of ordinary soldiers and, at the war's end, Eleanor Roosevelt credited her with "knowing more privates than anyone else." Although in her forties by then, Rosenberg lived as these low-ranked infantrymen did, eating GI rations and sleeping on the ground. When she returned, she made hundreds of long-distance phone calls at her personal expense to deliver messages to families of the men she met.

Born in Budapest, Anna Lederer grew up in New York and married Julius Rosenberg at age seventeen. She was an active Democrat and became friendly with the Roosevelts during the 1920s, when she also developed her career in public relations. After Roosevelt became president in 1932, he demonstrated his confidence in her abilities with appointments to the New Deal's National Recovery Administration and to the board that set policy for the new Social Security program. When the war began, she was the first female director of a regional office for War Manpower Commission. The problem of labor supply was largely solved by July of 1944, when she undertook traveling for the president.

In October of 1945, President Harry Truman, with whom she also had developed a friendship, awarded her the Legion of Merit. She was decorated a second time, in 1947, for her work as head of the New York Veterans Service Committee. Unlike many people who dealt with veterans, Rosenberg took an interest in the women who often were lost among them. In a January 24, 1946 editorial, the *Washington Post* quoted her conclusion that many female veterans "have been disillusioned by a cold reception from various women's groups."

Despite the precedent that it was, Truman's 1950 appointment of Assistant Secretary of Defense Anna Rosenberg was uncontroversial. After hearing accolades from top military leaders, including the wartime head of the Women's Army Corps, Oveta Culp Hobby, the Senate quickly confirmed Rosenberg. She set to work at the Pentagon on the personnel issues that Marshall considered her exceptionally qualified to

Assistant Secretary of Defense Anna Rosenberg, the only woman in civilian clothing, appears with the directors of the women's services at a television station to discuss plans for a Defense Advisory Committee on Women in the Services meeting, September 16, 1951. *Left to right:* Colonel Mary A. Hallaren, WAC; Colonel Mary Jo Shelly, WAF (Women in the Air Force); Mrs. Rosenberg; Colonel Katherine Towle, Women Marines; Captain Joy Bright Hancock, Navy; and Colonel Mary G. Phillips, ANC. *National Archives*



address. She played a role in the Women’s Armed Services Integration Act of 1948 and was particularly valuable in implementing the postwar Pentagon policy of ending the military’s longtime racial segregation.

General Dwight Eisenhower, who headed the European Theater of Operations, also had praised Rosenberg’s work, but probably because she was a Democrat and he a Republican, he did not keep her on after he won the 1952 election; she retired soon after his 1953 inauguration. Another factor may have been an unfortunate coincidence of names: later that year, the government would execute accused spy Ethel Rosenberg and her husband—Julius Rosenberg, the same name as Anna Rosenberg’s spouse.

In 1962, after forty-three years of marriage, the Rosenbergs divorced; she married Paul Hoffman, the first administrator of the Marshall Plan that restored Europe’s economic system and the brainchild of her former boss, George Marshall. She briefly returned to public life in the administration of Lyndon B. Johnson, serving on a commission related to his anti-poverty efforts. When Anna Rosenberg Hoffman died at age eighty-one, however, the important precedent that she set at the Department of Defense was almost entirely forgotten.

*See also:* **decorations; European Theater of Operations; Hobby, Oveta Culp; occupied Germany; rank; postwar; Roosevelt, Eleanor; veterans; War Manpower Commission; Women’s Armed Services Integration Act; Women’s Army Corps**

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## “ROSIE THE RIVETER”

“Rosie the Riveter” is a more popular phrase now than it was during the time of actual “Rosies.” The term applies not only to the millions of women who riveted, especially in aircraft factories and shipyards, but also to women who toiled at other non-traditional labor.

Several versions of the emblematic “Rosie” exist, but the most familiar now is the “We Can Do It!” image. That slogan rises above a woman’s work turban, while her rolled-up sleeve proudly displays a strong bicep and fist. Although she wears red nail polish and excessive eye make-up, her look is serious, honest, and determined. Oddly enough, the artist whose work is this current favorite, J. Howard Miller, remains largely unknown. He painted it in 1942 as a recruiting tool for Westinghouse, and the model was an actual Detroit-area riveter.

The “Rosie the Riveter” phrase, however, is most associat-

ed with immensely popular folk artist Norman Rockwell. His paintings were used by *Saturday Evening Post*, a magazine read each week by millions of Americans, and his “Rosie” was on the cover for May 29, 1943. She is a somewhat less realistic woman, who sits with her safety goggles on her forehead and a riveting gun in her lap; she wears overalls rolled up at the ankles, revealing red socks and brown loafers (not the safety shoes she should be wearing). She holds a sandwich above her shoulder, while a black metal lunch-box, with “Rosie” painted on it, sits aside her. The bib of her overalls is lined with badges for blood donations and other forms of volunteering; a powder puff and handkerchief peak from her pocket; and an American flag floats behind everything.

A more complicated image than that of the straightforward Westinghouse woman, this “Rosie” conveys what currently is called “attitude,” a mixture of pride in herself and indifference to opinion. She is big and muscular, but very much a woman. Perhaps because that combination was new, or perhaps because she rests her feet on a copy of Hitler’s racist diatribe, *Mein Kampf*, many found Rockwell’s image amusing. This model was not a riveter: she was telephone operator in Rockwell’s Vermont town, and he added the brawn of her body from his imagination. Model Mary Doyle Keefe, in fact, said that Rockwell later phoned to say, “I’m sorry; I made you a big woman.”

The *Post* loaned the original art to the Treasury Department, and during the next three years, eight war bond sales drives focused around it. Because of Rockwell’s stronger copyright restrictions, his painting was not as familiar as Miller’s in the late twentieth century, when the daughters and granddaughters of real “Rosies” became interested in their foremothers wartime work. Ultimately, this relative rareness hugely benefited its artistic value: Sotheby’s sold Rockwell’s “Rosie” in 2002 for almost \$5 million.

The icon also owes a large debt to a song, forgotten now, but popular then. Recorded by a male quartet, it was published by famed lyricist John Jacob Loeb and Redd Evans early in 1943. This “Rosie” definitely worked in aircraft manufacturing:

While other girls attend a favorite cocktail bar,  
 Sipping dry martinis, munching caviar;  
 There’s a girl who’s really putting them to shame—  
 Rosie is her name.  
 All day long, whether rain or shine,  
 She’s part of the assembly line  
 She’s making history working for victory,  
 Rosie the Riveter.  
 Keeps a sharp lookout for sabotage,  
 Sitting up there on the fuselage,  
 That little girl will do more than a male can do.  
 There’s something true about  
 Red, white, and blue about  
 Rosie the Riveter.  
 Rosie, Rosie, Rosie, Rosie, Rosie, Rosie the Riveter.

Not surprisingly, a number of women named Rose have claimed that they were *the* Rosie. Reducing the idea to one



## “ROSIE THE RIVETER”

individual, however, renders it less powerful than it is as a collective symbol for the millions of women who built the planes, ships, tanks, and materiel that won the war. The National Park Service recently honored these women with the establishment of Rosie the Riveter/Home Front Historical Park in Richmond, California, an area where thousands of women riveted for Kaiser shipyards.

*See also:* **aircraft workers; artists; bond sales; defense industries; dress; music; shipbuilding; telephone operators**

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## RUSSIAN WOMEN

Because the “Cold War” between the United States and the Soviet Union began almost as soon the fighting ended in World War II, it is crucial to understand that Russia (and her satellite states that composed the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics, or USSR) was a major ally of the United States. Indeed, it is unlikely that the Allies could have won without Russia. When Germany’s Adolf Hitler broke his pact with Soviet leader Josef Stalin and invaded that vast area, Britain stood alone against Nazi Germany. All of continental Europe and Scandinavia either had been neutralized or defeated—and if Hitler had not been so zealous that he began a second front instead of continuing to blitz Britain, he might very well have conquered all of the Old World.

More than British and much more than American women, Russian women played an important role in victory. Both nations used systems of compulsory labor for women: with exceptions only for genuine reasons of inability, all women were assigned to jobs in agriculture or industry, or they joined the military. Much more than Britain, however, Russian women advanced in the military and performed in jobs that

no other nation trusted to women. Russia’s greater utilization of female abilities can be seen just in its medical schools: while American women in the 1940s still were limited to small quotas in most medical schools, 85 percent of Russia’s future physicians were female.

Able-bodied Soviet men were in the military, and so about 75 percent of the civilian labor force was female. Women also served in the military’s ground and sea forces, and they flew even bombers and fighter planes; some earned decorations for hundreds of Nazi “kills.” They did every kind of job, and much of their work was heroically accomplished while under attack from invaders. American women read in *Collier’s*, for example, about the female engineer who raced her explosive-laden train out of Moscow while German bombs tried to hit it. Writer Quentin Reynolds praised the small-town mayor who, left naked and presumably dead by an execution squad, crawled to safety—dragging a dying man with her. War correspondent Alice Leone Moats wrote the pathetic story of an elderly aircraft spotter found dead on her roof, her frying pan useless as a helmet. Like Moats, photographer Margaret Bourke-White was in Moscow when bombs fell near her hotel, and she sent back photos to *Life* that were the first Americans saw.

The total commitment of Russian women was such that even Representative Clare Luce Booth, a Republican who certainly was no friend to the USSR’s communist economic system, nonetheless held up their example as an mirror for American women who wanted to do nothing more than remain comfortable housewives. When U.S. military recruitment fell to the point that all eligible men without children had been drafted, Luce said that there might not be a need to pull fathers from their families “if all the nieces of Uncle Sam would do their duty as well as all the women of Russia.” Russia, of course, also was far in advance of the United States in providing child care and other assistance that eased life for working women—and, indeed, many people used this as “proof” that professional child care was communistic.

Luce made her comments about the same time that *Ladies Home Journal* scolded those who complained about rationed meat, pointing out that “we still get ... twenty times as much as they do in Russia.” Women weak from malnutrition nonetheless helped defend Stalingrad, which was under siege from July 1942 to February 1943. The city was reduced to rubble, but the house-to-house warfare finally stopped the Nazi advance. Hundreds of thousands of invaders died, including Germans, Hungarians, Italians, Rumanians, and more—but not before they inflicted tremendous pain. The worst battle in human history, Stalingrad’s casualties numbered upwards of 1.5 million. Many were civilians who starved to death or were killed in the fighting—and this was merely the turning point. More than two more years of war remained after the Nazis retreated back west.

Recent study of Russia’s wartime deaths has continually resulted in upward revisions, with totals estimated at between 22 to 26 million fatalities—compared with less than a half-million for the United States. Especially civilian



Russian women dig ditches by hand, hoping that rougher terrain will slow down the invading German tanks and trucks during the Siege of Leningrad. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

deaths had been underestimated in the past, and some now believe that there were more fatalities among civilians than soldiers. The level of grief almost defies comprehension: one of every twenty-two Russians died during the war years. About 14 percent of its population died; the United States lost 0.3 percent. Not even the war's losers had losses that great, either in total numbers or percentages. Young Russian women who survived knew that they had little chance for traditional family life: they had to get an education and pursue a career; they had to assume that in the postwar world, they would be on their own.

*See also:* **British women; Bourke-White, Margaret; child care; correspondents, war; draft; decorations; fatalities; housework; labor force; Luce, Clare Booth; magazines; postwar; rationing; recruitment; underutilization; widows**

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## SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

From the Manhattan Project that was the genesis of atomic bomb to food dehydration for easier shipment abroad to the beginning of the computer age, World War II led to a great investment in scientific research and development. The War Department created an Office of Scientific Research and Development (OSRD), a usage that the military/industrial complex soon reduced to “R&D.” Because an open mind is the first essential quality for scientific research, women were more welcome in this area than in most.

That was not necessarily the case, however, and especially earlier in the war, women encountered old biases. Biochemist Icie Macy Hooper, for example, received an invitation to a 1942 scientific meeting held at the Chicago Club. Probably because of her unusual name, the hosts had not realized that she was a woman, and when she arrived, club employees refused to allow her in. Science historian Margaret Rossiter cited many other such examples: the Chemists’ Club of New York City, for example, did not admit women until 1958.

The war was an important transition, however, as it provided more funding for R&D and thus more opportunity for women. Josephine Clapp Osburn, for instance, was thrilled with the job she got soon after her 1944 Smith College graduation:

I found out that the U.S. Public Health Service had just opened Carter Memorial Laboratory in Savannah, Georgia, to study DDT ... and investigate its potential for mosquito control. The results were to be rushed to the SW Pacific, SE Asia, Eastern Mediterranean and India to aid our boys who were fighting, not only the enemy, but also the dire consequences of malaria, dengue fever, and typhus ... Each day was a new experiment. Everyone’s ideas, whether

from male or female, officer or technician, were equally welcomed and evaluated.

DDT, of course, would pose dangers unknown then, and the same was true for women such as botanist Fanny-Fern Davis, who tested her herbicide on the White House lawn. These and other aspects of chemical warfare eventually would be closely controlled or banned, but they served their dreadful purpose in World War II. Other chemicals turned out to be more benign, and their development changed women’s lives profoundly in the postwar era. Artificial fabrics may be the best example: although Du Pont Chemical Company had invented nylon in 1938, its value for light-weight but warm clothing had yet to be developed. Instead, women and children collected feather-like milkweed seeds to make life jackets light enough to float—but nylon and other light weight artificialities soon would displace natural fabrics. The same was true of plastic and its endless uses, another fundamental that was developed in the chemical labs of World War II. New formats for food also altered women’s lives, and they often were developed in laboratories run by female dieticians and home economists.

Women with backgrounds in science and math especially were wanted in the Navy’s WAVES. Many military occupational specialties (MOS) for WAVES required intelligence testing and security clearances, and once qualified, these women could be in on the ground floor of exciting concepts and inventions. Some six hundred WAVES, for example, helped break Germany’s “Enigma” codes—at a National Cash Register facility in Dayton, Ohio. “Working three eight-hour shifts,” said historian Emily Yellin, they kept “the vital production of the 200 code-breaking machines going twenty-four hours a day.” Billeted in bunks at their work site, they could not move freely between rooms because it





This woman works with plastic, a new material. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

was important to maintain secrecy on this highly classified project.

The War Department's OSRD also hired civilian scientists to work on relevant projects within the military. Within the Signal Corps, for instance, Rossiter cited at least five female scientists who pioneered radar, as well as four who "contributed to the OSRD's large penicillin project during the war." At least three women with doctorates in chemistry worked on its anti-malarial drug development. At the same time, however, most held job titles that were beneath their qualifications. "Only three women seem to have supervised OSRD projects," she concluded—while pointing out that the projects they "supervised" consisted solely of themselves. They were Maria Telkes of MIT, who developed a solar energy process to purify water on life rafts; Agnes Fay Morton of Berkeley, a pioneer in the dehydration of foods with a special emphasis on vitamin retention; and pathologist Virginia Frantz, who developed a cellulose compound that stop bleeding faster than in the past.

Despite underutilization of women, the war was so serious that the government freely funded new ideas—which led to

a postwar explosion of knowledge, much of which remained secret during the war. "Some day this war will end," *Science Newsletter* quoted the head of the OSRD:

Then the electronic devices used so effectively to help end it will be available for commercial purposes. I wish that I might tell you of the possible uses of these devices. They are marvelous beyond the comprehension of the average person, but I assure you that there will be a need for a large number of skilled men and women to install and operate them in every-day life.

He was speaking primarily of computers and their forerunner, the keypunch machine. The most famous woman in this area, of course, was computer-language guru Grace Hopper, a math professor who joined the WAVES when her husband went into the military. So new was the world of electronics that Hopper and others had to invent words for what they were doing. That high-tech terminology did not yet exist is clear from an *Independent Woman* article encouraging women to join the Coast Guard's female unit, the SPARS. Among the jobs listed for SPARS was "International Business Machine operator."

Countless areas of R&D expanded beyond the electronic. Military historian Kathleen Broome Williams included Hopper in her *Improbable Warriors*, but also featured aerologist Florence Van Straten. The multi-lingual child of Dutch immigrants, Van Straten earned a doctorate in chemistry, joined the WAVES, and rose to a top Pentagon position in atmospheric analysis. Nor was R&D limited to military women: the WAVES would not have accepted Mary Sears, a "short, arthritic, shy, forty-year old specialist in minute plankton." Her credentials, however, were exactly what the Navy needed in the Pacific Theater of Operations, especially after a disaster at Tarawa when coral made it impossible to land. Sears moved to Washington, D.C., and Chief of Naval Operations Chester Nimitz later said that she was "frequently called upon by the Joint Chiefs of Staff to furnish critically valuable information" from her knowledge of what was undersea.

The National Defense Research Committee similarly recruited mathematician Mina Rees. She had an exceptional ability to match areas that needed research with her contacts in academia, and she put the two together. Her speciality was recruiting the right scientist to study a question important to the military and then persuading that individual to put classes and personal research on hold for the war. So many research areas needed attention—and the funding to explore them—that Dr. Rees usually worked seven days a week. She recalled, "I was always so tired that I remember going to parties every now and then and not opening my mouth. Everybody thought I was so full of top secrets that I didn't dare talk, but it was just that I was too tired to talk."

Williams also wrote of five young WAVES who were small-town ingénues when they arrived for basic training in New York City; all were assigned to the new Naval Ordnance Test Station at China Lake, California, where "they fell in love with the desert and never left." When the war ended they made the transformation from military to civilian, but

stayed in the same place on the same jobs, researching and developing weaponry. “They are still there today,” Williams wrote in 2001, “their lives changed, expanded, and enriched by the few years they spent in the Navy more than fifty years ago.”

Indeed, because women could not be drafted, relatively few women in R&D actually were in the military. In some cases, such as Sears and Rees, they could not have met enlistment requirements and/or their time was too valuable to be spent in basic training. Thus many more women in R&D were civilians: the Women’s Army Corps, for example, grew to some one hundred thousand members—but the Army Corps of Engineers alone employed more than eighty thousand civilian women. These jobs, too, often required security clearances, but civilian women were more likely to work on the “D” end of R&D, assembling a product they only vaguely understood. One exception, however, was a civilian woman who also was a Hollywood celebrity: Hedy Lamarr did significant research on radio frequencies that transmit secret information.

Her idea was not implemented until after the war, and the same was true for others whose prewar careers had been limited by gender. The war was transitional for women who were underutilized during the Great Depression, but who would be recognized in the postwar era. Among them were future Nobel Prize winners Gerty Radnitz Cori and Maria Goepfert Mayer, both immigrants whose marriages to scientists meant that they were secondary to their husbands. Barbara McClintock, who in 1983 became the first American woman to win an unshared science Nobel, was able to move during the war from an underpaid teaching position in Missouri to a Long Island laboratory that would support her research for the rest of her life. Her initial work was ridiculed, but now is accepted as a fundamental genetic principle. That freedom to explore remains key to scientific research and development, as does a welcoming attitude to all curious thinkers, whether male or female.

**See also:** Davis, Fanny-Fern; censorship/secretcy; dieticians; draft; electronics industry; employment; enlistment standards; food shortages; Hopper, Grace; keypunch machines; Lamarr, Hedy; Manhattan Project; military occupational speciality; munitions; Pacific Theater of Operations; postwar; radio; recruitment; Signal Corps; SPARS; underutilization; WAVES; Women’s Army Corps

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## SEXUAL HARASSMENT

The term “sexual harassment” was not used until the late 1970s, and the lack of definition for the ancient practice certainly was a factor in its continuance. As feminist theorist Betty Friedan famously said, “the problem with no name” is impossible to solve, and in World War II, there was almost no direct attention to the issue. Men occasionally were disciplined for outrageously bad behavior in the workplace, but much more often, their (almost always male) superiors dismissed such “teasing” with “boys will be boys.” More often than not, the superior himself encouraged hostility against women with his own attitude.

“War was man’s business,” a typical colonel declared in *American Magazine*, and “women would only clutter it up.” The official historian of the Army Air Force (AAF) summarized the attitude towards the Women’s Army Corps members (WAC) as: “To many soldiers, the WAC was only a subject for crude jokes and injudicious remarks.” One of the most injudicious remarks came from an AAF colonel: *Flying* reported that, while watching a member of the Women’s Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) tow a target for gunnery cadets to shoot at, the colonel saw the target come down in flames and said, “Hell, they missed the girl!”

Because they were first, women associated with the Army suffered more bad publicity than the Navy’s later female corps. The WAC image, indeed, was so damaged that the Army conducted a serious investigation to determine if enemy propaganda was generating this “slander campaign.” Nor were women in other corps immune from harassment. Marie Pinter, for example, was a college graduate and an experienced employee of the U.S. Weather Bureau when she joined the WAVES, but nonetheless had to endure “pranks” that were so public male officers must have condoned them. At her aerology speciality school in Lakehurst, New Jersey, men outnumbered women ten to one. “The sailors in the mess hall,” she said, “took great delight in initiating each new unit of WAVES. They would set up the folding benches so that the legs would collapse as soon as the WAVES tried to sit down. We started a number of meals by rising to our feet as if on command until the joke wore thin.”

Maire Pinter and Marie Kimball both deposited their WAVES memoirs in archives at the University of Central Arkansas. Kimball went from basic training to aerial gunnery school at Pensacola, Florida, where she said:

We took the same course the boys took who went out as aerial gunners. Our drill sergeant was a Marine who did not believe women should be in the service. The rougher he was on us, the more determined we were to show him how good we were.

After 6 weeks of gunnery school, I was sent to the Naval Air Station at Grand Prairie, Texas ... When I reported for duty, I was met by a male yeoman, who took one look at my papers, called the gunnery department and shouted, "Pack your bags, boy, the Waves are moving in!" It turned out that his friends in the gunnery dept. had teased him about being replaced by WAVES and said that they never would be.

There was always someone who just couldn't believe that a girl could not only teach the men how to operate the guns, but actually fire them. One day I was giving a lecture on how to tear down and operate a 50 caliber machine gun. I asked if anyone had questions; a captain raised his hand and said in a very gruff voice, "Can you cook as well as you operate that machine gun?"

Although most sexual harassment had negative motivation, occasionally a superior male officer used it to arouse the anger that he knew a woman needed to make it through a crisis. When Corporal Maggie Hastings and two men were the sole survivors of a New Guinea plane crash that killed twenty-one others, both men deliberately provoked her. On their third day without food or treatment for Hastings' bleeding feet, she wanted to quit. "Right there," she said:

Decker turned into a tough top sergeant. He was even sicker than I, but he knew what he had to do to keep me going. The least thing he called me was a ... quitter. I got so mad ... I got to my feet and stumbled on.

Later, after the army parachuted in assistants and she wanted to bathe for the first time in a week, a Filipino medic offered "the soldier's universal bathtub: his helmet. He found soap, towels, a washcloth and clean clothing. Then," she said, "the men carried me down the hill and left me to scrub." Although she was the sole woman among a dozen or so men during the forty-seven days that it took to achieve a rescue plan, the men continued to respect her privacy. The same was true for thirteen army nurses under the command of Agnes Jensen who crash landed in Albanian snow; neither the men with them nor Albanians molested them during an even longer ordeal.

The difference was in whether or not a man knew a woman as an individual. Once a soldier or sailor worked directly with a woman, most came to respect and like each other. Because women were required to be older than men at enlistment, the usual relationship was that of a big sister and little brother. That was especially true for women in the Army Nurse Corps and Navy Nurse Corps: all members of these all-female corps were officers, and enlisted men therefore had to treat them respectfully. Male officers occasionally engaged in behavior

that could be defined as sexual harassment, but because their lives might literally depend on the goodwill of nurses, this was unusual.

The military's defined social hierarchy thus lessened the chances of harassment, but industry had no equivalent behavioral standard. Management and media treated women's entrance into blue-collar defense jobs first as a source of amusement and second as a problem—even though they desperately tried to recruit women at the same time. *Time's* May 1942 commentary was typical: "No problems like this bothered factory managers a year ago. But now perhaps, a very shapely sweater girl wanders in to take her place in the swing shift. Low whistles follow her as she ambles down the aisle between machines." Despite the ostensible urgency of the war effort, accountants found time to busy themselves with calculating the price of "the distraction caused by a woman walking through the plant." They found it to be very expensive, valuing the time lost at \$250. Moreover, in its very language—with fantasy-encouraging words such as "wanders" and "ambles" and even subliminally "swing shift"—*Time* blamed the victim for male inability to focus on work.

*Business Week* was less offensive, but it too described sexual harassment as "a new headache" for management, not as an insult to the women that management ostensibly wanted to recruit. The "infiltration of women" was best handled, it suggested, by controlling their appearance: "tight sweaters, snug slacks, and feminine artifices of color and style [are] distracting influences involving ... hazard to the men." Where the nature of the work made it possible, management's usual response was gender segregation, putting women in jobs where they were not likely to come into contact with men (and where it also was easier to pay women less).

Separating women from men, indeed, was so common a societal habit that one of the more unreasoned customs, according to Nell Giles, was that "men apply [for jobs] in the morning, and women in the afternoon." She worked incognito in several defense jobs to write a book, but she did not question separate-sphere thinking, which was so routine that even factories modern enough to have cafeterias often separated employees into women's and men's dining rooms. Perhaps the most egregious case was at a Detroit Cadillac factory that converted to war materiel and recruited women: in its September 1942 report, even *Time* was incredulous that management "keeps its first 25 women workers behind a *padlocked* door. Says an executive, 'You know how men are.'"

Lacking support from management or their unions, women in a number of defense plants figured out on their own how to handle the problem. Frank Taylor and Don Wharton were among several writers who reported that women spontaneously organized role reversals. When men faced catcalls, wolf whistles, and leering, along with critiques of their own bodies, their rude behavior stopped. Such juvenile antics, however, may have been less offensive than secretive hostility, something that was particularly likely from older men.

They were less likely than younger men to have gone to coeducational schools and more likely to have lived their en-



tire lives in rigidly defined spheres for men and women. Many strongly resented the women who seemed to be competing for their jobs, and although only a few resorted to sabotaging women's work, that did happen. More serious, too, was the male-promoted rumor mill that women wanted entrance into traditionally male jobs to benefit their real occupation, prostitution. Again, wives of blue-collar workers often repeated such slander about working women in general, while exempting the working women they knew personally.

Passive aggressive behavior was the most common male expression of hostility: not explaining the most effective way to do a job, for example, in the hope that the woman would fail and be fired. Josephine von Miklos, a talented machinist who also worked in several defense industries, told of many such cases. Writer Dorothy Warner reported on a munitions industry man so resentful of women that he routinely drove "10 miles out of his way each morning to pick up a carload of all-male passengers, while the girl who lived just down the street had to walk 2 miles to take the bus."

Feminist theory was virtually unknown in World War II, and it is indicative of the era's lack of understanding that women received the most public support in the area where, in fact, sexual harassment turned out to be least likely to occur. Female volunteers, especially for the USO, routinely were warned about potential male misbehavior—and the evidence is that men behaved much better in this situation than in the workplace. There could be a measure of harassment, however, especially from recruiters for these volunteers. Patricia Megargee, for example, told interviewer Roy Hoopes that her Manhattan employer "told us very definitely that they would prefer that we go one or two afternoons or evenings a week to this Stage Door Canteen. The atmosphere there was sheer desperation ... like here you are, now sit down and be charming, sparkle—a very unnatural situation. I didn't like it at all."

The artificiality that bothered her was, at its base, the resemblance to prostitution, a reinforcement of roles that reduced individuals to sexual objects. Once again, women were charged with controlling male behavior—and to their credit, men generally cooperated well with the era's courtship codes and most did not take unfair advantage of the situation. That situation was different, however, from the presence of women in the military and on the factory floor, something that was new and threatening to men. It would take decades—and new labor laws—to define these differences and to change outdated habits.

*See also:* **Air WAC; courtship; defense industries; dress; Jensen, Agnes; Pacific Theater of Operations; prostitution; recruitment; "slander campaign"; unions; volunteers; USO; WAVES; Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP); Women's Army Corps (WAC)**

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## SHIPBUILDING INDUSTRY

Shipbuilding is an ancient craft. Men in the business shared a rich heritage that most hated to share with newcomers, especially women. Of all the major defense industries—aircraft manufacture, munitions, electronics, and more—shipbuilding was the least welcoming to women.

Male resistance to change also was based in a reluctance to accept that wartime shipbuilding radically abbreviated old methods. Already by 1942, the seven shipyards in the Pacific Northwest that were owned by Henry J. Kaiser had perfected techniques that made it possible to launch a large cargo-carrying "Liberty" ship in less than a week. Instead of building from the keel up, various parts were assembled separately and then joined together, with the final welding and riveting often done by women. The Kaiser Corporation made 1,460 of the nation's 2,770 Liberty ships; its speed record was the *Robert E. Peary*, which was constructed from start to finish in an amazing four days.

That urgency was necessary because much of the Pacific fleet sank in the attack on Pearl Harbor, and Japanese attacks continued to create losses during the war's first years. Tens of thousands of vessels would be needed, in every form from life boats to aircraft carriers. Troop transport ships had to be built to carry millions of men (and about a hundred thousand women) overseas, and cargo ships would hold thousands of trucks, tanks, massive guns, and other heavy equipment.



This is a “flying boat,” which was used in all theaters of the war. The women are riveters, the most common task assigned to women. Except for the noise, it was highly analogous to sewing. *Courtesy of Martin-Marietta Naval & Aero Systems*

The expansion was very rapid, as employees in shipbuilding jumped from about 100,000 in 1940 to 1,500,000 in early 1943. The number of women soared from just 36 in 1939, when the war in Europe began, to about a quarter-million by the end of 1944. The example of British women again was used to recruit American women, as a manager of a Kaiser yard in Portland pointed out to *Independent Woman* “there is a British shipyard where two-thirds of the workers are on the distaff side.”

Kaiser not only was the leader in hiring women, the company also revolutionized other aspects of the industry. Its shipyards, which ranged from Richmond, California, to the great harbors at Portland, Oregon, and Seattle, Washington, introduced many aspects of communal living that eased wartime life. It provided housing in these overcrowded boom towns—available only to families with employed women. Susan B. Anthony II also praised company cafeterias that offered nutritious meals at affordable prices, including carry-out meals, something that was important in an era prior to microwaves and fast food. Most shipyards ran twenty-four hours a day, but relatively few emulated Kaiser in providing child care for all shifts. Other services also cut down on absenteeism, and it pioneered non-profit health programs.

Kaiser was the exception, not the rule, and women who worked in older shipyards, especially on the Atlantic and Gulf coasts, could not expect such a progressive outlook from their employers—but they, nonetheless, worked. In 1942 alone, Virginia’s Norfolk Navy Yard announced that it was recruiting some 7,500 women; Mobile, Alabama wanted a thousand female shipyard workers; and the Beaumont, Texas area grew into a major employer of female shipbuilders. Women worked in Philadelphia and other Delaware River yards: Wilmington’s Dravo Corporation, for example, had a mere 400 employees in 1940; by the height of the war, it had 11,000. Women worked on virtually all of the 187 ships built by this one company during the war—or almost

a ship per week. Brooklyn’s yards lifted a 141-year ban on employing women, while Baltimore’s school system did a particularly good job of running pre-school programs so that women could work in its harbor. A personnel manager at Electric Boat Company in Groton, Connecticut, was innovative enough to successfully seek out an especially motivated group of women: the local wives of Navy men who were on submarine duty at sea.

As in other defense industries, especially aircraft manufacture, managers found that women had unrecognized abilities. Almost all noted that their bodies fit more readily into tight spaces for riveting and that they were more dexterous in stringing electrical wires through small holes. Most soon realized that welding and riveting were analogous to sewing. As Virginia Wilkinson, a Connecticut worker, observed: “It’s really simple to build a ship ... You get your plan, cut out your pattern, prefabricate it, fit it together and launch it.” Josephine von Miklos, who knew that she was good at mechanics, noticed that other women had similar aptitudes: “the other day a woman who had never seen a metal saw in her life ... cut a complicated pattern on it in half the time it has taken an experienced man to do it. The foreman was delighted.”

Women not also worked as riveters and welders, but also operated drill presses, grinders, and lathes. They drove trucks and lifts, and they worked in warehouses, sheet metal shops and electrical departments. Working down in the hold of a ship required extra commitment, as construction noise magnified and echoed—a “dentist’s drill multiplied by a hundred,” said Wilkinson. Nor was working outside necessarily more pleasant: on hot Gulf Coast days, welders also had to endure an electrical arc that generated 6,500 degrees of pure heat. At a Connecticut shipyard, von Miklos wrote:

The girl shipfitters are outside, right on the ships; and in the barges, right on the edge of the waterfront where winds always blow and the temperature is always fifteen degrees lower than anywhere else. They are out there those days of

## SHIPBUILDING INDUSTRY

biting gales and icy planks ... A hundred men walked out on one of the coldest days. The girls stuck.

A shipbuilding executive in Hingham, Massachusetts, echoed her observations about “girls” and men. His was a huge yard, with ten thousand employees on each of its three shifts, and in an interview with oral historian Roy Hoopes, he recalled that many male employees seemed to be motivated by the fact that shipbuilding jobs were considered “essential civilian employment” and thus exempted a man from the draft. Sometimes, he said, this lack of motivation resulted in indifference to work:

I turned in two ... fellows ... They had hooked up some of the wires in the electronic equipment wrong. I asked them why, and they answered, “Oh, golly, I don’t know.” Once, you could understand, but when it happened two or three times ... After I turned them in, I asked the FBI fellows about it, and they said not to worry, that they were in the army now—drafted ...

We also had “Rosie the Riveter.” A lot of gals did welding work. As a whole, I’d say they did a pretty good job ... I had a couple of women—tack welders for putting up the U-shaped hangar that you ran your cables through. They were good, and they liked it ...

[Everyone] wanted to get into the shipyard because it was paying more than anyplace else, and then, it gave ... a draft status they wanted. Having been in the service—and shipwrecked at sea on a raft—some of the things that happened in those days still bother me. I used to get real provoked at some of these fellows in the yard..., especially when I found

fellows that wouldn’t work properly. I transferred some of them the hell out.

Virginia Wilkinson was appalled at the indifference and efficiency in her workplace. Even though her only previous experience was as a housewife, she understood time management and especially safety better than some “essential civilians.” Management was particularly casual about frequent accidents:

A piece of steel would drop on someone’s feet and sever them from his body, but there would be no outcry or fuss ... The ambulance would come silently and quickly, and as silently and quickly remove all traces of the tragedy, with no work stopped, few words said, no fuss made.

Von Miklos also wrote that accidents were common and that little was done to prevent post-injury infections. “Our fingers get forever cut and bruised and infected from the incredible filth around us,” she said. “We wear small and large bandages and we go on with the work.” Wilkerson added that on her first day at the job, she climbed high onto scaffolding near red-hot rivets. Nervous about the danger, she asked her mentor if people often fell from the scaffold to the concrete floor far below. “Not often,” he replied, “just once.”

ElvaRene Daughhetee Plimpton was a Texas teacher who moved to Oregon to work in a Portland shipyard. She chose the late-night shift, “the graveyard,” because it “paid much more,” but had to quit relatively soon because, she told authors Wise, “because my eyes are poor, and sometimes when your [welding] hood is up and someone strikes an arc, the



These women are leaving work at a shipyard in Beaumont, Texas, on the Gulf of Mexico. Note the middle one, who has changed to the era’s proper attire, including a hat. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*



pain from the light is very great.” Beyond that, she had suffered an eye injury, which she explained: “There’s a spring that should be screwed on the riveting gun, but the man near me was in a hurry and he hadn’t done that ... The trigger flew out and broke my glasses, my regular glasses because safety glasses hadn’t arrived yet, and I had to go to the hospital with pieces of glass in my eye.”

Safety goggles, helmets, leather pants, and sturdy shoes were important—and yet weren’t always available, especially not in sizes small enough to prevent women from tripping and falling. Several sources, including La Verne Bradley, reported that nurses in shipyards were always busy, and according to historian D’Ann Campbell, 9 percent of “injuries in shipyards occurred as a direct consequence of women’s failure to wear safe attire.” Responsibility for this went back and forth, with management excusing itself by saying, “it’s hard to make youngsters tie up their glamour bobs,” while the workers objected that no one offered safety gear. The overall evidence is that shipyards did not adopt standard uniforms or follow the safety measures that were mandatory for the (many more) women in the munitions industry.

The munitions industry also hired many African-American women, something that Mary Anderson, head of the Women’s Bureau of the Labor Department, encouraged shipyards to do. She especially promoted minority women who had completed vocational training with the National Youth Administration. The conservatism of shipbuilding meant that she was largely unsuccessful—but Anderson did report that a black woman made the highest grade among some six thousand people who took the Civil Service exam for civilian employees in U.S. Navy shipyards. Examinations were objective proof of ability, but few private contractors—the vast majority of shipbuilders—used them, nor did the federal government require them to do so.

As a result, African-American women employed by shipbuilders were likely to do more menial work. Sara Brooks, for example, wrote that she cooked in a Mobile café in 1944: “This was across from the Alabama shipyard, and I learned that they might be hiring at the shipyard, so I went there and got hired and for more money.” Then, realizing that the reader might misinterpret the nature of her job, she quickly added, “I wasn’t doing shipyard work, now; I was working in the office building cleaning up.” After this step, however, Brooks and many other African-American women moved entirely out of traditional women’s work by moving North and/or to defense industries that discriminated less, especially munitions.

Again because of the shipbuilding’s conservative heritage, unions failed to recruit new female employees. Women paid their dues in yards that were closed shops, of course, but unions did little to protect their rights, much less try to equalize their pay with that of men. Worse, *Business Week* said early in the war:

The AFL unions in the Portland shipyards are trying to screen the prostitutes from their membership rolls. Fifty women lost their union work permits because they were

discovered plying their trade in the holds of new Liberty ships; others because, with date book in hand, they spent their working days in the shops soliciting patrons for their leisure hours.

A collateral fear is that the prostitutes may consort with negroes, who then might try to take liberties with other white women—and this might lead to serious race complications.

Even though she may have earned the highest grade among six thousand test-takers, an African-American woman stood no chance with such male mindsets. Although the Roosevelt administration issued executive orders that were intended to be an early form of affirmative action, the war emergency was so great that enforcement could not be thorough. Age discrimination, too, was common, and especially at the war’s beginning, managers almost invariably preferred young women. Many learned, though, that older women were more reliable and less likely to be absent. By 1943, Bernice Oppenheimer reported that “some yards refuse to accept girls under twenty ... The average age is twenty-five to forty-five; with surprising frequency one comes across women between fifty and sixty.”

The most commonly enforced rule was in the opposite direction of affirmative action: most shipyards did at least a minimal security check to screen out not potential saboteurs. ID badges generally were required, and all employees were warned not to talk about their work. “Loose lips sink ships” signs were everywhere, and they were serious. Prewar and postwar launch ceremonious with women crashing a champagne bottle across the bow disappeared during the war. Employees might take a few minutes to celebrate when they saw their work hit the water, but everyone understood that a low profile was important to ensure that enemies could not learn how many ships were being launched and where. German submarines operated in the Atlantic for much of the war, and from Pearl Harbor onwards, West Coast workers understood that secrecy was vital. Neither shipbuilders nor passengers knew where a ship was headed when it sailed.

As much as the industry permitted them, women participated in building the vessels that were vital to victory—but when the war’s end was in sight, women in shipbuilding were among the first to be laid off. Virtually none were rehired in the postwar era, and as airplanes replaced ships, even for cargo carrying, the industry continues to decline.

*See also:* absenteeism; aircraft workers; boom towns; British women; censorship; child care; defense industries; draft; dress; employment; housing; labor force; males, comparisons with; munitions; nurses; pay; Pearl Harbor; postwar; recruitment; teachers; travel; uniforms; unions; wives of servicemen

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## SIGNAL CORPS

The Army Signal Corps has had that name since Civil War soldiers sent signals to each other from high hills or towers, using flags in the daylight and torches at night. Like Native-American smoke signals, these also were visible to the enemy, and it was therefore necessary to disguise meanings so that foes could not figure out what was being communicated. The chief purpose of the Signal Corps is communication between officers, and because battle success often depends on how much the enemy is surprised, secrecy is key.

By World War II, telegraphs and telephones had long since replaced signals on a hill, and the majority of phone operators had been female for decades. Indeed, upwards of

two hundred French-speaking American women contracted with the Army and went overseas as telephone operators and translators in World War I—at the direct request of that war's top commander, General John J. Pershing. Although their history has been diminished by dubbing them "Hello Girls," more than a dozen of these women worked very close to front lines. When, on October 13, 1918, "a fire broke out in the barracks housing the main switchboard," said military historian Rebecca Robbins Raines, "the women remained on duty until they were finally forced to evacuate." Their leader, Grace Banker, earned the Distinguished Service Medal, and some of these women stayed on in Paris after the armistice to operate communications for President Woodrow Wilson during 1919 treaty negotiations. Like other para-military women in this war—even the more than thirteen thousand in the Navy and Marines—they received no veterans benefits until 1979, when the revitalized women's movement drew attention to their valor.

The need for women in this field was so clear, in fact, that prior to the 1942 congressional authorization of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC), the Army created a bureaucracy for hiring civilian women—WIRES, or Women in Radio and Electrical Service. In this usage, "radio" was not broadcast radio, but rather two-way communication on radio waves: this was essential in locations where there were no phone lines. "Electrical," too, was not intended in the modern sense, but referred to telephonic transmission. The clearest example of terminology may be that the era's union for phone company employees was (and often still is) the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers. WIRES women were not unionized, of course, but as civilians, they were much freer than military women to set their own schedules and to refuse assignments. Therefore the Signal Corps especially wanted women who were subject to military command.

The result was that, more than other Army corps, the Signal Corps welcomed the WAAC and its successor, the Women's Army Corps (WAC). Because women were so eagerly anticipated, Signal Corps WAACs were the first non-nursing military women to go overseas. In January of 1943, just months after the WAAC began, hundreds of them began replacing men at telephones in the North African headquarters of Supreme Allied Commander Dwight D. Eisenhower. The first group had a disastrous voyage, including being torpedoed, but nonetheless immediately went to work. Phone service, said Eisenhower aide Major General W. B. Smith, "improved 100%" after their arrival. "We had to have them," he told the *New York Times Magazine*. "We can't get along without them; they work like the devil ... They don't complain or fuss." He added that WAACs handled highly confidential matter every day and "proved they can keep their mouths shut."

General Smith's praise, of course, had to wait until the North African campaign was over, but as soon as commanders could go public with this news, the accolades for Signal Corps WAACs poured back to Washington. Army historian Mattie Treadwell quoted three top commanders: "The manner



WAC photographer serving with the Army Ground Forces, First Service Command, 1944. Note the Signal Corps logo at the bottom left. *U.S. Army Signal Corps Photo, Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

in which they picked up the work was outstanding;” “Very soon I received praise of the improved results”; and “Don’t tell me a woman can’t keep a secret. Why, their own company commander doesn’t even know where the [switch]board is located—we’ve tested the girls again and again.”

That the [female] company commander did not know where her subordinates were working indicates the strong emphasis that the Signal Corps put on secrecy. Everything operated on “need to know,” and the Signal Corps, in fact, believed that a WAAC commander did not need to know the exact location of switchboards and radios as battle lines moved. The result was significant isolation for enlisted women because female officers did not have the necessary security clearance to visit their workplaces. Treadwell believed this was damaging to morale, but interviews with enlisted women at the war’s end showed that most did not mind this imposed lack of communication with female officers.

Like all other WAACs, these had gone through basic training and then went on to speciality schools, usually at Camp Crowder, Missouri, or at Fort Monmouth, New Jersey. From there, they were assigned all over the world, according to the need for their particular military occupational speciality (MOS). In addition to operating short-wave radios, telephones, telegraphs, teletypes, and even early facsimile machines, they also installed and repaired equipment. Aptitude tests revealed that many women had innate abilities in these areas, and eventually some five thousand WACs were assigned to the Signal Corps. Its commanders repeatedly requested more, but without the threat of a draft for women, WAC recruitment never was able to meet the allotted goals.

Recruitment might have been better if the public was more aware of the interesting work that these women were doing—

job assignments that sometimes even surprised them. When British Prime Minister Winston Churchill met President Franklin Roosevelt and other Allied leaders in Quebec in August of 1943, for example, Treadwell said that twenty-nine WACs were notified just hours before their duty began:

Rushed from train to switchboard, the women were on continuous duty for eighteen hours and doubled as secretaries and stenographers when a shortage of these occurred. After seventeen days of secret duty, each member received an individual commendation. Wacs also served successfully on the switchboards at the Cairo Conference and the Potsdam Conference.

The Cairo Conference involved not only Roosevelt and Churchill, but also China’s Chiang Kai-shek; Roosevelt had died by the summit in Potsdam, a suburb of Berlin, but President Harry Truman was there, along with Russia’s Joseph Stalin. Enemies would have loved to have known of these assassination possibilities—hence the secrecy and late notice for Signal Corps WACs. Although women had not yet reached the point of being executive-level participants in such conferences, those with superior abilities in communication literally worked next to history makers, as these conferences also were the foundation of the United Nations.

When the fighting moved from North Africa to Italy and north, Signal Corps WACs were joined by colleagues moving south from England to the European Theater of Operations (ETO), and after its 1944 liberation, Paris became the primary communication site. According to Raines, General Omar Bradley declared his ETO communication system the “most valued accessory of all.” Never before in history had a supreme commander been in his situation, as he declared: “from my desk in Luxembourg I was never more than 30 second by phone from any of the Armies. If necessary, I



could have called every division on the line ... Congress can make a general, [but] it takes communications to make him a commander.”

The Navy did not allow its women to go overseas, but Signal Corps WACs in the Pacific Theater of Operations performed work there that had tremendous effect for the Navy and Marines. Selene Weise was a Signal Corps WAC in the South Pacific: her letters home were guarded in their language because of the secret nature of her assignment, but when she published the letters, she also summarized her work experience:

My job was interesting. I logged in all the messages that came into the center to be encrypted and transmitted. Then I logged them as they went out on the wire with the time, which Headquarters they had come from, and where they were going ...

Many of the incoming messages came in over radio and the reception oftentimes was not very good due to the tremendous humidity and high mountains ... Often after a message had been decoded and typed for transmission, it still looked very much like it was in code. My job was to go through these garbled patches and try to figure out exactly what should have been said.

Virtually all of our messages had to do with incoming ships and requisitions for materials... Even though there would often be just a letter here and there that was correct, it was enough to be able to figure out the rest. My cryptographic training had prepared me well to do that, plus the fact that I had a pretty good imagination. In addition, my first year at Camp Wallace, Texas I worked in the Quartermaster and had taken care of supply records so I was familiar with all the terminology. Most often I could send a message out to the recipient that made perfect sense.

Other women worked in semi-secret installations in the United States, including Virginia’s Arlington Hall, a former women’s college, and Two Rock Ranch, a facility in the California desert; the Holabird Signal Center near Baltimore was another restricted site. Some Signal Corps WACs had an MOS in photography; they trained at Colorado’s Lowry Field and worked all over the world—but among the most interesting work was in semi-secret film labs and libraries on Long Island, where they assisted in interpreting photos, especially photos of enemy territory. More women with a photography MOS, however, were assigned to relatively boring jobs shooting posed photos of ceremonies.

The largest work site for Signal Corps WACs was at the War Department’s Signal Center in Washington, where almost a thousand were assigned by early 1945. Writer Edgar Swasey observed:

Working around the clock in eight hour shifts, the Wacs share responsibility of circuits to all parts of the globe. This station, the world’s most important communication center, handles more than 10,000,000 words daily. Through the Wacs’ hands pass messages destined to change the course of battles, to bring reinforcements to tired GI’s in the front lines, to send supplies to places where they are desperately needed ...

They carry a heavy burden of responsibility, for a message garbled or incorrectly transmitted might cost thousands of lives ...

Security of military communications is of first importance. The Wacs must be alert at all times to prevent valuable information from falling into the hands of the enemy. They must recognize messages which require censorship and must see that the messages are censored ...

The work took a toll. Treadwell reported that “severe nervous strain was imposed by the necessity for constant attention ... as one slip wrecked everything.” When locations were secret, even from WAC officers, the result was that a woman could go for months without leave or even a pass to go off-site. Male Signal Corps officers made these difficult conditions worse by insisting on rotating shifts every two weeks, so that by the time one had adjusted to the graveyard shift, she was back on the swing shift. Because they lived in the same barracks, night workers tried to sleep while day workers enjoyed their time off. WACs in general enjoyed good mental and physical health, but Signal Corps WACs were the most likely to encounter problems. In the Mediterranean, Treadwell said, “an estimated fifty women had suffered mental breakdowns,” by the war’s end, while “in the Southeast Asia command, the majority of all illness occurred in the minority of women who were assigned to the Signal Corp.”

Still, most women were fascinated by their work, and many returned to it as civilians in the postwar era. In demobilization records, Signal Corps WACs said: “I love my work and enjoy being overseas”; “I wouldn’t miss being here for anything;” and “I wouldn’t change places with any girl back home.” Treadwell quoted:

Many wonderful things happen to us. We’ve sailed the seas as other troops have, served on foreign soil, marched in Allied Nations parades, have seen and met some of the world’s most famous men ... I have never before had the complete satisfaction of worthwhile accomplishment that I get from my work.

**See also:** censorship; Chang Kai-shek, Madame; cryptography; draft; European Theater of Operations; North Africa; Pacific Theater of Operations; Quartermaster Corps; radio; recruitment; telephone operators; United Nations; Women’s Army Corps

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## "SLANDER CAMPAIGN"

The Army used this term for the bad publicity that faced the new Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC), and later, the Women's Army Corps (WAC). Some of the gossip that circulated about these women was so unwarranted and so damaging to the positive image needed for recruitment that a months-long investigation was conducted to determine if enemy propaganda was responsible.

From the beginning, the WAAC had to overcome an erroneous public perception that women who enlisted in it primarily would be assigned as "hostesses" to entertain soldiers. Ironically, this was the role that evolved for civilian women who volunteered with the USO—and who never suffered the malignment that WAACs did. It also was a completely false impression of the WAAC, as its creators did not envision entertainment (or cooking or laundry or any traditional "women's" roles); instead, its aim was to allow women to replace men in a multitude of technical military occupational specialties (MOS). Needs that specifically motivated WAAC creation were MOS categories such as bilingual telephone operators, airplane spotters, cryptography, and other such fields far removed from entertainment.

The first advertising agency that publicized the new WAAC, however, was run by men who used a thoughtlessly typical "sex sells" subliminal approach, and newsmen quickly followed that line. Titles on news stories about the entrance of women into the military very often promoted a frivolous image. Even if the text contradicted the title, which was frequently the case, damage was done by superficial headlines such as *Recreation's* "WAC's Wiles are Womanly," *Time's* "She-Soldiers," and *Newsweek's* "Devil Dames." The latter wrongly predicted the name of the Navy's WAVES with "Wacks and Warns in Prospect for Petticoat Army and Navy," while *Business Week* chose "Decking a Wave" for a report on WAVES' uniforms. Even stories by female journalists became jocular, with titles such as "Bounding Waves" and "Down to the Sea in Slips."

The military's early recruitment drives, too, featured models and showgirls that reinforced an entertainment image, and WAAC director Oveta Culp Hobby took too long to fire her public relations consultants. By January 1943, when Signal Corps WAACs arrived to do serious censored work in North Africa, leadership finally acknowledged that this distortion was damaging. Among the actions taken was to close down

a show in Algiers titled "Swing, Sister WAAC, Swing"—someone's idea of an appropriate greeting.

But to be treated as trivial was preferable to the outright slander that built in the fall of 1942 and came to a head in the summer of 1943. Much of it originated, sadly, in the religious community, especially with Catholic clerics who objected when Congress created the WAAC. According to *Time*, a Massachusetts bishop told his flock that "he hoped no Catholic woman would join the WAACs, as it was opposed by 'teachings and principles of the Roman Catholic Church.'" The Rochester diocese declared that even the entrance of women into civilian war work constituted "a serious menace to the home and foundation of a true Christian and democratic country." *Commonweal*, a Catholic weekly, concluded that the "war work she might do no longer signifies, for the soul of our society will already be lost." A Brooklyn church publication was most rabid: *Time* quoted it as saying that the WAAC was "an opening wedge, intended to break down the traditional American and Christian opposition to removing women from the home and to degrade her by bringing back the pagan female goddess of de-sexed, lustful sterility."

Such flights of confused fantasy were even more remarkable in view of similarities between WAACs and nuns. Both lived in highly disciplined and isolated cultures; both lifestyles required irreproachable behavior and extraordinary commitment to a cause. Both groups of women were likely to spend much of their time on work that was menial compared with their intelligence. And although WAACs did interact with men more than nuns did, WAACs had to be in their barracks at lights out and had many fewer chances to engage in questionable activity than did civilian women. But that, of course, was not what truly worried the proponents of the status quo: they simply were conservatives who benefited by keeping women in a secondary place.

These attacks were especially hurtful to the first recruits at Fort Des Moines, whose qualifications were extremely high and whose character had been thoroughly vetted. To be sure, the Catholic chaplain there pointed out that since the arrival of women, he "had to have three masses every Sunday, [with] about 1,400 Wacs" attending weekly—but his testimony was filed with other memos later brought to light by Army historian Mattie Treadwell. The press preferred more lurid headlines, and many thoughtless Americans told each other unverified tales, resulting in a public impression that any WAAC who wasn't a nymphomaniac probably was a lesbian. Gossip even came from the most unexpected sources, as, according to Treadwell, an Army Nurse Corps member alleged:

Wacs at training centers were lined up naked for men medical officials to inspect, that no sheets were used on examining tables, and that medical officers showed Wacs pictures of naked men and of men sitting on toilets ... Christ loves these girls and I know he does not like for them to have to line up naked and it is embarrassing for our girls every month.

There was, of course, no truth to her tale, and by the time that the inspector general flew in to investigate the allegations, the nurse had been hospitalized as psychotic. The undercurrent of gossip intensified when WAACs went to North Africa early in 1943 and became virulent that summer, largely because of a scurrilous “report” by *New York Daily News* writer John O’Donnell, whose column was widely syndicated in newspapers opposed to the Roosevelt administration. On June 8, 1943, he wrote:

Contraceptives and prophylactic equipment will be furnished to members of the WAAC, according to a super-secret agreement reached by high-ranking officers of the War Department and the WAAC Chieftain, Mrs. William Pettus Hobby ... It was a victory for the New Deal ladies ... Mrs. Roosevelt wants all the young ladies to have the same overseas rights as their brothers and fathers.

The claim was totally without basis, of course, and even O’Donnell’s media colleagues came down on him. Calling him “pompostorous,” *Time* indignantly said that “many an honest U.S. newspaper man was outraged” by O’Donnell and that his “hatred for Franklin Roosevelt ... leads him to flout the standards of journalism.” The Washington women who originally promoted the WAAC decided that the rumormongers had to be confronted, not ignored, and Congresswoman Edith Nourse Rogers addressed the issue in an interview with *Newsweek*. “Rumors of Waac immorality had sprung up all over the country,” she said. “The worst was the story that one group of Waacs had been guilty of misconduct down to the last member and that several had been sent home pregnant.” Rogers investigated and found that of five hundred WAACs in North Africa, only two had returned home, and the one who was pregnant also was married.

This misinformation had been broadcast on Nazi radio, and it seemed probable to Rogers that fascist sympathizers in the United States were spreading lies to damage recruitment. WAC Director Hobby agreed, and after some reluctance, her male superiors agreed to investigate. A few days after O’Donnell’s attack, according to Treadwell, the adjutant general sent this memo to the FBI:

Consequent to the formation of such a women’s auxiliary ... a certain amount of indecent humor was to be expected. However, the inevitable so-called humor ... has been replaced by a circulation of plainly vicious rumors ... What appears to be a concerted campaign has assumed such proportions as to seriously affect morale and recruiting.

Among the truly vicious rumors that FBI detectives checked out was that “any soldier seen dating a Waac would be seized by Army authorities and given medical treatment.” In the area near Hampton Roads, Virginia—home to the Navy, not the Army—the story was that 90 percent of WAACs were prostitutes, 40 percent of whom were ignorant enough to have become pregnant. In Daytona Beach, Florida, the second WAAC training site, WAACs allegedly “were touring in groups seizing and raping sailors.” Treadwell added that “an apparently organized rumor ap-

peared in many localities ... that Army physicians ... rejected all virgins.” An obscene drawing of “anatomical specifications” managed to circulate all the way from Philadelphia to New Guinea.

Representative Rogers told Congress that “nothing would please Hitler more” than such slander of patriotic young women; the *Washington Star* also quoted Representative Mary T. Norton telling her colleagues that “loose talk concerning our women in the Armed Services cannot be less than Nazi-inspired.” As it turned out, the congresswomen apparently thought too well of American men: the FBI found little evidence of German participation. It was true, the FBI reported, “that Axis-controlled radio” in Europe “has followed a line of rumors,” but they were “already widely circulated [in Europe] by Army personnel ... business men, women, factory workers, and others ... Most have completely American backgrounds.” Postwar investigation of Nazi files also indicated that they were aware of the “slander campaign,” but had not originated it.

Some of the responsibility for WAAC reputations, unfortunately, arose because of confusion with other women’s groups, especially the WOW, or Women Ordnance Workers. This was a semi-official designation sometimes given to civilian women who worked in the munitions industry, most of whom were newcomers to towns with recently built defense plants. Just one example was in Stockton, California, where oral historian Gruhitz-Hoyt said that “civilian women worked at the Stockton Ordnance Depot dressed in khaki,” and locals believed that the WOWs were WAACs. According to an Air WAC stationed nearby, the civilian women “got drunk in bars, were foul mouthed and caused fights.”

The munitions industry was more likely than any other to hire black women, and there may have been a racial tinge to these stories. It is noteworthy, however, that in literally thousands of FBI interviews about hundreds of allegations, none focused on the appreciable number of African-American WAACs. It is possible, of course, that rumors were ignored in their case, but it seems more probable that black men understood that their sisters were enlisting in the military for career opportunities unavailable to them elsewhere. African-American women had a long history of working outside the home, and their men felt less threatened by independent women. Rhetoric about abandonment of home and family rang much less true for them.

In the end, O’Donnell and other right-wingers probably did the WAAC an unintentional favor. Secretary of War Henry Stimson not only denied O’Donnell’s claim in the strongest terms, but also made it clear that such slander constituted aid to the enemy. All down the chain of command, Army men rushed to echo him, defending WAACs and praising their contribution to the war effort. The public scandal did in fact “raise hell,” as one male commander said, and “long distance calls from parents” indeed “took the pride and enthusiasm right out of ... young women; the older ones were just bitter.” Hundreds of thousands of brothers told their sisters not to join the military, and countless women cried over malicious



letters from friends and family—but ultimately, they survived to be stronger.

It may have been virtually inevitable that such a profound change in the status of women would be strongly condemned. Actions spoke louder than words, though, and as more young women stood up to the suspicion and hostility of loved ones, more and more people began to see a WAAC as the girl next door. Male soldiers who worked with them discovered that they were no different from civilian women back home who also worked behind desks and at telephones or in hospitals. Partly because of the denunciations of military chiefs and mostly because what had been strange became familiar, the gossip eased as the war continued. By its 1945 end, a special patron saint medal was struck for Catholic members of the WAC, while Marine Corps' SPARS were honored with a mass and breakfast at St. Patrick's Cathedral. No one called them "lustful" or "de-sexed," at least not in print.

**See also:** advertising; Army Nurse Corps; birth control; cryptography; Hobby, Oveta Culp; magazines; military occupational specialties; munitions; North Africa; Norton, Mary T.; recruitment; Rogers, Edith Nourse; pregnancy; prostitution; sexual harassment; SPARS; USO; venereal disease; WAVES; Women's Army Auxiliary Corps/Women's Army Corps; WOW

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### SMEDLEY, AGNES (1892–1950)

That Agnes Smedley is more famous in China than in her native land speaks volumes about her life and women's status. Born in rural Missouri to a poor family, she spent her youth in several western states. Her education was sporadic, but she was obviously intelligent, linguistically gifted, and self-confident enough to seek out the era's social reformers, including Upton Sinclair. She had moved to New York City by World War I, where she was further radicalized after spend-

ing several weeks in the infamous Tombs prison because of an unfair arrest.

Smedley left for Europe in 1919; among other activities there, she co-founded the first free birth control clinic in Germany. Her primary interest, however, was India's independence from Britain, as she had studied Indian culture and lived with an Indian man in Berlin. They had separated by 1928, however, and after writing an autobiographical novel, *Daughter of Earth* (1929), she took a job as a correspondent for a Frankfurt newspaper. She left for Manchuria, hoping to eventually work her way back west to India.

That never happened, but Smedley soon became an expert on China. In addition to her newspaper work, she published *Chinese Destinies* (1933) and *China's Red Army Marches* (1935). The latter indicated the close relationships she was developing with future Chinese leaders, including Mao Tse Tung and Chou en-lai. When she first arrived, Smedley had expected to support Nationalist Chiang Kei-shek in China's civil war, but traveling widely in this huge and impoverished country convinced her that he would—and should—lose the civil war. Both sides temporarily ended their internal conflict when Japan attacked Manchuria in 1937. Dressed in camouflage, she traveled with the Red Army hundreds of miles, much of it on foot, to confront the Japanese.

She sent a manuscript on this experience back to the United States, and *China Fights Back: An American Woman with the ... Army* was published in by prestigious Knopf in 1938. As the Japanese continued to attack China's coastal cities, Smedley worked for the Red Cross, volunteered as a nurse, assisted refugees from Japanese bombs, and located desperately needed supplies—while also writing insightfully for England's prestigious *Manchester Guardian* of the war in Asia.

Despite the harsh lifestyle that she eagerly pursued, Smedley never had been healthy: she had a weak heart and a spinal condition that made her long treks particularly painful. She also contracted malaria in the summer of 1940, which made it necessary to fly to the British colony of Hong Kong for treatment. Too passionate to use this excuse to abandon her activism, she soon was organizing food relief for China from there. Knowing that Americans also would be receptive, she returned to the United States in the summer of 1941, just prior to Japan's extension of the war to Hawaii's Pearl Harbor.

Americans who had not been paying attention to Asia changed their habits after that attack, and so the book that Smedley published two years later, *Battle Hymn of China* (1943) made her quite famous, at least among the nation's intelligentsia. Although she never came close to rivaling Pearl Buck in mass popularity, she delivered a similar message of racial tolerance and help for the poor. Like Buck, she wrote for *Asia* magazine, and Freda Kirchway of *The Nation* also published Smedley's work.

When China resumed its civil war at the end of World War II, Smedley's predictions proved accurate: by 1949, it was clear that China's Communists had more popular support

than the American-backed Nationalists, who were forced to retreat from the Chinese mainland to the island of Taiwan. She had never joined the Communist Party and said in her 1943 book that she did not want to be part of an ideology that believed its creed was the only truth—but nonetheless soon was seen as too far left and, indeed, treasonous. General Douglas MacArthur, who led the Pacific Theater of Operations and occupied Japan, charged her with being a Soviet spy, an accusation that the Pentagon quickly withdrew. With her longtime prescience, Smedley escaped the coming debate on “Who Lost China?” and its most prominent leader, Senator Joseph McCarthy, by moving to Oxford, England.

She died there on May 6, 1950, just short of the fifth anniversary of V-E Day. Her final work, *Portraits of Chinese Women In Revolution*, was not published until 1976, when the Feminist Press issued it and a new edition of her autobiographical novel. Always thinking ahead, Agnes Smedley planned that her ashes be sent to Beijing. There they were buried in a state ceremony, an honor not bestowed on any other foreigner.

**See also:** birth control/birth rate; Buck, Pearl; food; Chinese-American women; Chiang Kai-shek, Madame; Kirchwey, Freda; occupied Japan; Pacific Theater of Operations; Pearl Harbor; Red Cross; refugees; spies; V-E Day

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### SMITH, MARGARET MADELINE CHASE (1897–1995)

The first woman elected to both the U.S. House and the Senate, Margaret Chase Smith served more than three decades in Congress. During this time, she sponsored legislation that permitted non-nursing women to join the Navy and its branches, the Marines and the Coast Guard. A native of Maine, she had a long interest in maritime issues.

She worked as a teacher and telephone operator until marrying at age thirty-three; her husband was elected to Congress in 1936, and when he died, she easily won the June, 1940 election to replace him. Much more remarkably, Smith would be consistently re-enlisted until 1972. A woman of unquestioned integrity and intelligence, she was a Republican who voted with Democrats more often than many of the era’s Southern Democrats. She strongly supported President Franklin Roosevelt’s interventionist policies over the isolationism of

her own party, and when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor during her first term, this prescience was justified.

Soon after Pearl Harbor, Representative Edith Nourse Rogers (also a childless widow) introduced legislation to create the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps, and Smith followed with similar legislation for the Navy’s WAVES, as well as the Coast Guard’s SPARS and Women Marines. She won a coveted position on the House Naval Affairs Committee after her 1942 re-election, which strengthened her lead on those issues. Congresswoman Smith visited naval bases in the Pacific Theater of Operations as soon as the Navy allowed and took special interest in the Navy Nurse Corps.

After the war’s end, Smith led passage of the Women’s Armed Services Integration Act of 1948. Again, she demonstrated her usual candor and straightforwardness, not an attitude necessarily suited to the increasingly bureaucratized Pentagon. According to authors Ebbert and Hall, she wrote, “a sharp letter” to the new Secretary of Defense James Forrestal. She demanded that this famed Navy veteran stop exchanging on what appeared to be hypocrisy and double talk on the issue of women in the peacetime military:

The basic question is whether we are to accept official “on the record” statements of the executive and military heads of the Armed Service or the “behind closed doors” statements of your legislative representatives to individual members ... I believe that immediate action ... is imperative.

In the same year, she successfully campaigned for the Senate. It was not an easy task, as her opponents included both Maine’s current governor and a former governor. First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt summarized Smith’s skill: “She had run against her party organization, most of the money in the state [and] won ... more votes than all three of her masculine competitors put together.” Although Smith’s initial Senate appointments were poor, she eventually rose to seats on three top committees: Armed Services, Appropriations, and Rules.

Margaret Chase Smith earned a permanent place in the history of free speech with her stand against Republican colleague Senator Joseph McCarthy, whose postwar accusations of communism threatened the careers of many outstanding public servants. An outraged McCarthy recruited a candidate to run against Smith in the 1952 primary—and Maine Republicans supported her with an astonishing 80 percent of the vote. Her 1960 campaign also marked a milestone, as it was the first time that two women were the nominees of the major parties for a Senate seat: Smith defeated Democrat Lucia M. Cormier. In 1964, Smith ran for president, campaigning in several states and receiving twenty-seven votes on the first ballot of the Republican convention that nominated Barry Goldwater. Again, this was a precedent for women.

She probably should have retired when she considered it in 1972, but she was offended by her opponent’s ageist attacks and undertook a fifth Senate race. She was seventy-four, however, and would be eighty by the time the term ended; that, plus her support for the Vietnam War—and



Senator Margaret Chase Smith faces the camera during a Boy Scouts drive for scrap metal. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

her own political stupidity in not maintaining an office in Maine—brought her first defeat in thirty-two years. It left the Senate all-male for the first time since the four-year period between the defeat of Arkansas’ Hattie Caraway in 1944 and Smith’s 1948 victory. At mid-century, however, Roosevelt had been correct when she called Smith “the country’s top woman politician.”

Margaret Chase Smith lived ninety-eight years and earned the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1989. Her record for female longevity in the U.S. Senate has yet to be broken.

**See also:** Caraway, Hattie; Marines, Women; Navy Nurse Corps; Pacific Theater of Operations; Pearl Harbor; Rogers, Edith Nourse; Roosevelt, Eleanor; SPARS; teachers; telephone operators; WAVES; Women’s Armed Services Integration Act

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## SPARS

Authorized by Congress and signed into law on November 22, 1942, the Coast Guard’s SPARS was the third of the

four non-nursing military units for women that began during World War II.

The first had been the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps, and the sound of its unfortunate initials led to countless jokes about “wack” or “wacky.” The Navy thus paid careful attention when it created its WAVES, as did the other two naval branches, the Coast Guard and the Marines. Although few were aware of it, WAVES stood for Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service, but the letters in SPARS were not an acronym for anything. The name, however, was appropriate on several levels: as a verb, of course, to spar means to fight; as a nautical noun, it refers to the beams that support a ship’s sails and lines, including the main mast; and most important, the letters encapsulated the Coast Guard’s motto, *Semper Paratus*, or “always ready.”

SPARS were precedent setting in another way, too: both the Navy and the Marine Corps had admitted women during World War I, and the Army Nurse Corps had existed since 1901, but this was the first time that women enlisted in the Coast Guard. As was the case with all of the women’s services, standards were higher than for men—but lower than for WAVES, with only two years of high school or business equivalent required for the SPARS enlisted women and just two years of college for officers. That was especially impressive because officer candidates in the SPARS attended classes with men at the historic Coast Guard Academy in New London, Connecticut.

“Tradition took a trimming today,” the *New York Times* reported on December 29, 1942, “as thirteen women sailed into the portals of the United States Coast Guard Academy. For the first time in American martial history a government military institution swung open its doors to women.” It was indeed quite something: the fight for female admission into the prestigious academies of West Point (Army) and Annapolis (Navy) would take another generation. Although there were some limitations, the SPARS gave female officer candidates more of a coed experience than did any other military service.

While WAVES usually trained in civilian educational settings, especially women’s colleges, SPARS went to OCS (officer candidate school) with male cadets. Writer LaVerne Bradley declared:

Officer candidates for the SPARS train along with Coast Guard cadets at the U.S. Coast Guard Academy, New London, Connecticut ... Barracks have been bisected ... separating SPAR quarters from those of cadets ... The SPARS have their own lectures and their own drills, but their life is cadet life ... SPARS go down to the sea in ships, but it’s mainly for morale purposes and to teach them [nautical information] ... Coast Guard cutters take them on occasional training runs, but never very far out. They learn to handle lifeboats, too.

Twelve of the thirteen original officer candidates were WAVES who resigned their commissions for what they hoped would be a better maritime experience in the SPARS. Another 150 WAVES soon emulated them, and according to



SPAR Regimental Review, US Coast Guard Training Station, Palm Beach, Florida. Hotels were vacant because tourism virtually ended during the war, and many contracted with the military to provide housing for soldiers, including women. *U.S. Coast Guard Photo, Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*



Coast Guard historian John Tilley, “more than 700 of the 955 SPAR officers commissioned during the war received their training at New London.”

Because so many facilities of all sorts were pressed into use for military training and because the SPARS’ creation was relatively late, the Navy initially was uncertain where to place basic training for enlisted women. Army historian Mattie Treadwell reported that “the SPARS, without waiting for the proposed Navy school, sent women to the WAAC school.” The first SPARS indeed trained at extant facilities for WAACs and WAVES, especially at women’s colleges, before naval superiors overruled such cooperation between the services.

Then the Navy leased the huge and luxurious Biltmore Hotel in Palm Beach, Florida. Because of gas and tire rationing, civilian travel was nearly impossible during the war, and this model already was used for the second WAAC boot camp, which was conducted in vacant tourism sites in Daytona Beach, Florida. Thus, for more than seven thousand SPARS, boot camp was the Biltmore, mentally converted to barracks.

The pragmatic proposal to use the facilities of other services came from the SPARS newly appointed chief, Dorothy Stratton, one of the first thirteen WAVES who transferred to the SPARS. Hers was a much easier task than those of her WAAC counterpart, Oveta Culp Hobby, or the WAVES’ Mildred McAfee: not only did Stratton have models, her corps was intended to be small; its eventual total was about eleven thousand. The WAVES and WAC, in contrast, rose to some one hundred thousand each, about ten times the size of the SPARS. With typical one-size-fits-all mentality on women, however, Stratton was commissioned with the same rank as McAfee.

Palm Beach and New London proved a real boon to recruitment, and high school counselors used the uncommonly good locations of the SPARS to encourage girls to study the math and science that could advance a Coast Guard career.

Because the SPARS was both later and smaller, it did not receive the media attention that had greeted the WAVES and especially the WAAC—but *Education for Victory*, a federal publication aimed at wartime adolescents and their mentors, correctly pointed out that this service might well be the best choice for high school girls because of its relatively low enlistment standards and excellent educational sites.

The SPARS uniform also was adopted from that of the WAVES, and like the other naval corps, women in the SPARS used nautical terminology even though they were ashore. They were the only women’s service, however, who were taught to use “sir” in all forms of address, including their female officers. SPARS arguably had more ceremonial and public relations duties than other groups, including recruitment parades and bond sales drives; like some other units, it had a military band. Because of the limited nature of the Coast Guard itself, the number of military occupational specialties (MOS) open to SPARS was relatively small: they held just forty-three MOS slots, compared to more than four hundred for WAACs. By far the majority were clerical.

A few SPARS were fortunate enough to serve as honor guards at the founding meeting of the United Nations in San Francisco, and some were privileged to work in Massachusetts on the highly secret electronic navigation system known as LORAN. A dozen staffed an all-female LORAN testing station on Cape Cod, working twenty-four hours a day under the command of Lieutenant Vera Hamerschlag. She told military historian Judith Bellafaire, “LORAN was so hush-hush that not even the training officer had any conception of what the duties of those SPARS would be.” SPARS also were stationed at every Coast Guard port facility across the country, but more than anywhere else, they worked in Washington, D.C. Like other “government girls” in the overcrowded capital, at first they billeted wherever they could, including hotels and apartments; later, they moved into quickly-built barracks on Independence Avenue. The great-



This photo from the mid-1950s shows career Coast Guard member Lieutenant (junior grade) Elizabeth Hall swearing in young men. She had taken the oath in 1943, sworn in by her Coast Guard captain father; three uncles also served in the Coast Guard. *U.S. Coast Guard Photo, Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

est number worked at an extremely shabby former railroad property at 1300 E Street.

Another motivation for joining the SPARS may have been that it was probable that women would meet a better class of men in the Coast Guard. Historically, it had been under the Treasury Department: its original impetus was revenue collection, i.e., enforcing tariffs on imported goods. Transferred to the War Department shortly before the war began, the Coast Guard's mission remained close to home, and because it was seen as safer than any other services, many men enlisted in it rather than take the chance of being drafted for rougher duty in the Army or Navy. More than other services, it was composed of men who had grown up with private sailboats and other accouterments of a gentlemanly life.

Thus the congressional ban that forbade naval women from going overseas (except for the Navy Nurse Corps) was even more to be expected by SPARS than by WAVES and Women Marines. Late in 1944, some eight hundred SPARS finally were assigned to shore duty in the Alaska and Hawaii territories. Those had who enlisted in the SPARS because they hoped to actively sail coastal waters would be disappointed, as the "overseas" ban was lifted at the same time as the announcement that no more SPARS officer candidates would be accepted.

Instead of newspaper headlines about women joining men in Coast Guard cutters, the stories were of demobilization plans. Although the media occasionally emulated *Independent Woman* in pointing out that SPARS training made these women "ideal executives," most would find that the civilian economy did not value their experience. "With one voice," wrote Nancy McNerny, "the girls of the Wac, Waves, Spars, and Marines complain that prospective

employers completely disregard their two or three years' experience."

Finally, like the other naval services but unlike the WAAC, it was very slow to accept African-American women. Although historian Tilley said that recruiters were so diligent that they made "repeated treks through the cotton fields of the South to seek out potential SPARS," no blacks were admitted until well after the Navy Department ordered their admission in October, 1944. The first was in March 1945, and, when the war ended in September, the number of black SPARS literally could be counted on one hand: five of some eleven thousand.

The SPARS was officially done with demobilization in July of 1947, and largely because the Coast Guard returned to the Treasury, it was excluded from the Women's Armed Service Integration Act of 1948. Not until 1965 would women again be able to join the Coast Guard.

*See also:* **African-American women; Army Nurse Corps; censorship/secretcy; colleges; Daytona Beach; demobilization; draft; enlistment standards; "government girls;" Hobby, Oveta Culp; Marines, Women; McAfee, Mildred; Navy Nurse Corps; rank; rationing; recruitment; scientific research and development; Stratton, Dorothy; United Nations; veterans; travel; WAVES; Women's Armed Service Integration Act; Women's Army Auxiliary Corps**

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## SPIES/ESPIONAGE

American espionage was infinitely less developed during World War II than it is today. Autocrats elsewhere long had employed spies, but Americans cherished their differing values: until the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) was quietly developed during this war, the United States had no intelligence agency. The OSS became the CIA (Central Intelligence Agency) with the war's end, but relatively few Americans were aware of it. Indeed, fifteen years after the war ended, when an American plane over Russia was shot down and its picture-taking pilot captured, President Dwight Eisenhower confused the situation by pretending that the military did not use reconnaissance planes. When the 1960 incident finally forced the government to acknowledge the reality of American spies, most of the public was shocked.

Women, like men, had informally spied in the nation's earlier wars. Both British loyalists and rebellious Americans informed on each other during the Revolutionary War; American women had a particular advantage in that British troops often were quartered in their homes, and many risked arrest to tell American commanders what they overheard. In the Civil War, numerous Confederate women volunteered as spies. Rose Greenhow was the most famous. She lived within sight of the White House, and ran a ring of approximately fifty agents who told Southern commanders of Northern intentions. All of this was informal, however, and perhaps because of the voluntary and unpaid nature of such espionage, there probably were more female spies in early American history than later. During World War II, in fact, it took an intelligent woman even to discover that there was an intelligence agency to which she might apply.

The OSS began in July 1942—the same month as the Navy's WAVES and about three months after formation of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC). Its ineffective bureaucratic predecessor was the Coordinator of Information (COI), a one-year futile attempt to combine positive public relations at home with disinformation and espionage abroad. President Franklin Roosevelt split the functions into the Office of War Information and the OSS, which would be headed by the former COI chief, Colonel "Wild Bill" Donovan.

In another example of the ardently Democratic president's willingness to include Republicans in his administration, Roosevelt chose "Wild Bill" explicitly because Donovan was unconventional, with limited respect for hierarchy and rules. Despite poor relations with some of his military superiors, he built a worldwide organization that, according to the introduction he wrote for Elizabeth McDonald's book on her OSS experience, employed twenty-six thousand agents. The vast majority of women were clerical workers, he acknowledged, but even that task required extraordinary intelligence and ability to keep secrets. His own reports to the president, in fact, went through confidential White House aide Grace Tully.

Some of the extraordinary women who enlisted in the WAVES and WAAC might well have waited for the OSS had they known of that possibility, and it doubtless would

have been a better use of their qualifications than the menial routines of boot camp. Future French chef Julia Child, for example, joined the OSS after the WAVES rejected her for being too tall, and, although she served in the China-Burma-India theater (CBI) and never did anything particularly dangerous, other women did. They were recruited for assignments that called for absolute fearlessness, as well as a depth of knowledge that enabled them to make life-or-death decisions quickly and independently. Virginia Hall probably has become the most famous: she was called "the Limping Lady" because she had lost a leg while working for the American embassy in prewar Turkey.

Despite this serious handicap, Hall repeatedly risked her life to spy for the Allies in occupied France, and many consider her, in the words of author Judith Pearson, to be America's greatest female spy. Linguistic ability, too, was very important: the most successful spies spoke several languages fluently. Erica Glaser serves as an example: she joined the OSS at age twenty-two because she was fluent in German, French, Italian, Spanish, and English—and had many friends in the anti-Nazi underground. McDonald, a journalist who had been in Hawaii when Pearl Harbor was bombed, spoke only limited Japanese, but she was quickly hired when an agent discovered this. An unnamed woman who began work on the same day as Virginia Hall said that she was curious to see "how her knowledge of the Malayan language, her art training in France, Germany, and New York, her four years in Java could change the Allied war effort in the Far East."

Artistic ability, in fact, was important, as one of the chief things that women did was to create all sorts of realistic-looking fake documents—even in places such as Java, where printing materials were limited. Even the hundreds of agents in the relative safety of London did work that called for an unusual combination of both imagination and painstaking attention to detail. Women who developed identities for agents who sneaked into enemy territory, for example, had to do huge amounts of research to create a faux biography for the spy that would match the details of the area in which the spying was to be done. If the intelligence agent was claiming to be a peasant from Dijon, for example, he or she had to know enough about Dijon to appear credible; the spy had to wear clothes and shoes like those a lower-class Dijon person would wear. If plans called for sabotage, such as blowing up a German train or starting a fire in a club frequented by Nazis, then, of course, every detail became even more important. The work called for the seemingly contradictory abilities of creativity and methodical, step-by-step research to foresee what might go wrong.

Evangeline Bell, a young Radcliffe College graduate who had lived in France much of her life, proved to be outstanding at this work. She spent the war in London, expertly crafting false identities and attending to the smallest details that would ensure covertness. One example is that the French typically sewed buttons with a crisscross pattern, while Anglos used parallel construction. She lost just one spy, a man who threw away a half-smoked cigarette—something no French



person would have done under years of deprivation—and his thoughtlessness cost him his life. A month before D-Day, Bell had thirteen teams of undercover agents, including women, in France. At great risk, they parachuted in at night, established radio contact with London, and provided information to make the invasion successful.

Neutral Switzerland provided a haven for the OSS in the European Theater of Operations (ETO), and, according to writer Peter Kross, Rachel Dubendorfer was in charge of one of three “vital” spy rings there, called “Lucy.” Although her own code name was “Sissy,” she proved anything but that—and late in the war, she asserted her independence after becoming distrustful of men who turned out to be working against U.S. interests. Sweden also remained neutral, and Lillian Traugott later was honored for the work that she did with refugees who managed to escape there. She was the only female OSS agent assigned to work in Scandinavia with leftists who had eluded fascists. Her interviews later became evidence to prosecute German Nazis in war crime trials.

Gertrude Legendre also reached a relatively high position in the OSS. A Virginia native, she headed its Washington Cable Center and then went on to London, where she “handled communications from agents in France, China, Ceylon, North Africa, and Italy, all vitally important areas.” Legendre worked in Paris after its liberation and wore the uniform of the Women’s Army Corps (WAC) as a disguise for her true employment. She was in civilian dress, however, when she went to Luxembourg with a male colleague in September 1944, and the Gestapo arrested them. Taken to Berlin, she stuck to her invented story for two months and revealed no secrets. Legendre also planned her own escape, finding Germans who were willing to help her. “In a scene worthy of a mystery thriller,” Kross concluded, “she dropped from the moving train [and] ran as quickly as she could to the Swiss border.”

Barbara Lauwers actually was a WAC in Italy in July 1944, when she was assigned to the OSS because of her linguistic abilities. Her heritage was Czech, and she spoke that language as well as German, Slovak, French, and English. The OSS sent her into enemy territory in southeastern Europe, and under the guise of a “League of Lonely Women,” she successfully encouraged men to desert the German army. Lauwers also exploited animosities between the army’s ethnic groups and especially is credited with persuading Czech soldiers to abandon Hitler’s forces. She wrote speeches, ostensibly from Czech men who had deserted, that were broadcast in northern Italy—and then printed passes “good for one return trip to Czechoslovakia via Allied lines.” Some six hundred soldiers accepted the passes, sneaked out of their posts, and surrendered to Allies. Because she was a WAC, Lauwers was eligible for and received the U.S. Army’s prestigious Bronze Star. Her example shows, though, how much underutilization there was because women did not know that the OSS provided an alternative to the WAC.

“Cynthia” was the code name for Amy Elizabeth Thrope, a Minneapolis native who married Briton Arthur Pack and lived in Europe during the 1930s. Perhaps the best publicized of spies in recent years, her most important espionage took place before the United States entered the war. Under the aegis of the British Secret Service, she worked in Warsaw and briefly in Chile before returning to Washington in 1940. As a beautiful Georgetown hostess, she pried secrets out of Italians there and delivered the information to the British. The United States still was neutral but Nazi Germany had installed its puppet government in Vichy, France, when “Cynthia” performed her most famous exploit: with the cooperation of a besotted Frenchman, she burglarized the French Embassy in Washington. The communication codes that she stole proved useful in 1942, when American troops moved from French North Africa towards Vichy.

As European areas were liberated from the Nazis, women proved particularly adept at information gathering. Emmy Crisler Rado had been interviewing refugees from Nazi-occupied areas since September 1941, before the U.S. entry into the war. Again, the OSS hired her not only because she was multi-lingual, but also because of her proven ability to persuade refugees to tell what they know about current conditions in enemy territory. Because many refugees reasonably feared that she (and other agents) might be fascists seeking to arrest them, Rado and her colleagues made a real effort to make their interviewees comfortable. According to McIntosh, even when the person being interviewed spoke English, OSS women “found it useful to speak German to the Germans, French to the French.” Frightened escapees from the Gestapo were more likely to open up to women in their native language, and Rado added, “My Swiss dialect worked wonders.”

On the other side of the world, both OSS women and members of the Women’s Army Corps (WAC) worked in the CBI and the Pacific Theater of Operations (PTO)—despite objections to both the OSS and women from PTO commander Douglas MacArthur and the CBI’s “Vinegar Joe” Stilwell. Espionage was harder there for several reasons, beginning with obviously non-Asian appearances that made it impossible to use the disguises that worked in the European Theater. The United States did have close enough relations with the Philippines that many Filipinos risked their lives to assist Americans against their Japanese conquerors, but espionage was difficult in most of Asia. At the same time, however, officials can be faulted for greatly underutilizing women who did have knowledge and contacts in this area.

At the top of the list should have been famed author Pearl Buck, who lived in China for decades, spoke its languages, and had many friends there. Journalist Peggy Hull Deuell was similar: she spent most of the 1920s and 1930s in Asia, and her friend, Irene Corabally Kuhn, was the first person to broadcast on radio from China in 1928. Reporter Shelley Smith Mydens became a prisoner of war, and her colleague Martha Gellhorn had visited in 1941, just before Pearl

Harbor. Businesswomen Rose Hum Lee and other Chinese-American women had similar knowledge and contacts that went unused.

Camilla Mills, for example, had been a missionary to China from 1923 to 1931, when she returned to the United States to marry a professor of Chinese history, Knight Biggerstaff. She was one of many talented women whose abilities were underutilized during the Great Depression and even during the first years of the war, but the State Department finally employed Camilla Biggerstaff when the couple returned to China in 1944, as the war in the Pacific was being won. They lived in Chungking, but were able to remain in Asia only until 1949, when Chiang Kai-shek's forces lost China's civil war to its communists. Like many of their academic friends, the Bickerstaffs were persecuted by the House Un-American Activities Committee in the early 1950s, as right-wing Republicans sought headlines during national debate on "Who Lost China?"

Another underutilized woman was Dr. Cora DuBois, an anthropologist who worked in India. Although she was, according to author Maochun Yu, the only woman in the OSS heading a major R&A [research and analysis] outpost, her abilities were not used as much as they could have been. "Her brilliance as well as her lesbianism," Yu said in an endnote, "caused her trouble in the patriarchal world of the U.S. Army." Such "trouble," however, was not so much a personal insult to DuBois as it was a mistake for the nation: America's foreign policy makers could have avoided serious postwar difficulties had they paid more attention to these and other women—including Agnes Smedley, an American on the "wrong" side of China's civil war.

The OSS disbanded in October 1945 and was replaced by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Allen Dulles, the CIA's first director, had led the OSS in neutral Switzerland and was familiar with the abilities of Erica Glaser and other women, but he did not particularly reach out to them—despite the model of his sister, economist Eleanor Dulles. Roosevelt had appointed her as director of financial research for the new Social Security system in 1936, and as a State Department executive during and after the war, Eleanor Dulles played a major role in Germany's reconstruction. Their brother, John Foster Dulles, headed that department in the Eisenhower administration—but gender limitations meant that Eleanor Dulles never would rise to the top. The same was true for other women, and the CIA never has had a female chief. From Nicaragua to Vietnam, the intelligence agency might well have provided more intelligent foreign policy had it been more inclusive.

*See also:* **censorship/secretcy; correspondents, war; Child, Julia; cryptography; Chiang Kai-shek, Madame; D-Day; decorations; European Theater of Operations; French women; Glaser, Erica; Hall, Virginia; intelligence, military; occupied Germany; Office of War Information; Pacific Theater of Operations; refugees; Smedley, Agnes; underutilization**

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## STRATTON, DOROTHY C. (1899–2006)

The first commander of the Coast Guard's SPARS, Dorothy Stratton resigned her position as dean of women at Indiana's



Captain Dorothy Stratton laughs with some of the Coast Guard's SPARS who are under her command. *U.S. Coast Guard Photo*

Purdue University to join the Navy's WAVES—and when the SPARS developed just months later, she was a natural choice to head it. The committee of women who recommended other women to the Navy for these positions already had shown their preference for academics with the choice of the WAVES' Mildred McAfee.

Born in Brookfield, Missouri, to parents who valued education, Stratton earned graduate degrees at the prestigious University of Chicago and Columbia University—yet during the years of the Great Depression, she taught high school back in her home town, as well as two towns on the West Coast. Although she had her doctorate, she nonetheless took this opportunity for additional study at West Coast universities, including Berkeley, before Purdue hired her as an assistant professor of psychology and full-time women's dean in 1933. Dr. Stratton thus went into the military well aware of the lesser rewards that women receive for superior credentials.

Her background in psychology and educational administration made her an excellent, completely uncontroversial director for the SPARS. That her experience was in coeducational institutions probably was a factor in the exceptional coed nature of SPARS training; its officers were the first to be admitted to an elite military institution, the Coast Guard Academy at New London, Connecticut. She also was primarily responsible for the SPARS' name. According to records

at the Women's Memorial in Service to America (WIMSA), Stratton said, "a spar is a supporting beam, and that's what I hope each member of the Women's Reserve will be."

President Franklin Roosevelt signed the legislation authorizing the SPARS on November 22, 1942, and Stratton was sworn in as its director the very next day. She would serve in this capacity until January 16, 1946. The highest rank that Congress authorized for the SPARS was lieutenant commander, and the quota for her top staff was limited to eighteen women with the rank of lieutenant. Congress reconsidered this the next year, and Stratton was promoted to captain, the Navy's equivalent of an Army colonel. The illogic of rank in the women's services can be seen in the fact that colonel was the highest rank awarded to Oveta Culp Hobby, who originated the Women's Army Corps and commanded ten times the number of women that Stratton did.

Captain Stratton earned the Legion of Merit, and at her 1946 retirement ceremony, Secretary of the Navy James Forrestal called her "a brilliant organizer and administrator who demonstrated a keen understanding of the abilities of women." Unlike McAfee, she did not return to academia, but stayed in Washington and served as an executive of the new International Monetary Fund until 1950. In the following decade, she was the national director of the Girl Scouts until her final retirement in 1960.

Dorothy Stratton lived another half-century after that, not dying until age 107. She returned to West Lafayette, Indiana, the home of Purdue, and is buried with her parents in its Grandview Cemetery. Air Force General Wilma Vaught, head of WIMSA, said "for years, I called and sang 'Happy Birthday' to her. On her last birthday, in 2006, her mind was just as clear as it had always been. [She was] a truly remarkable woman."

*See also:* colleges; decorations; Hobby, Oveta Culp; McAfee, Mildred; rank; SPARS; WAVES; Women's Army Corps

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## STRAYHORN, ELIZABETH CHERRY (1903–2002)

Elizabeth Strayhorn was the first woman to command a basic training camp for the Women's Army Corps (WAC).



The corps' first such "boot camp" was at Fort Des Moines, Iowa, and its second was in Daytona Beach, Florida; both were headed by male officers. The third, at Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia, was the only one that had a woman in charge of WACs—although it did not at the beginning. Unlike Colonel Don Faith, the stellar male commandant at Fort Des Moines, Fort Oglethorpe had a series of unsatisfactory male leaders until the War Department made this first female appointment.

Its location, in the northwestern corner of Georgia near Tennessee and Alabama, required special sensitivity because of the era's rigid segregation. The WAC was the only women's corps that was adequately integrated, and some Southerners resented seeing black women in uniform. At the same time, some Northern recruits had difficulty adjusting to life in the South. The major problem, though, was that male commandants ignored the fort's poor condition, resulting in low morale. Strayhorn's familiarity with the area, plus her excellent credentials, made her a perfect choice.

Born (with a twin brother) in Nashville, Tennessee, Strayhorn was called "Liz." After graduation from Vanderbilt University, she taught high-school math in Augusta, Georgia, and then earned a master's degree from Vanderbilt's prestigious Peabody College of Education. She taught math at Western Kentucky University and also spent a year at Radcliffe College, the female auxiliary of Harvard University.

She was vacationing in Europe when war broke out there in 1939, and thus was especially aware of the impending danger. After completing her academic obligations, she joined the WAC on September 1, 1943; she would win her precedent-setting appointment to Fort Oglethorpe less than a year later, in April of 1944. In February, according to Army historian Mattie Treadwell, the inspector general reported of WACS who were at the end of basic training there:

A check on one group of 30 recruits showed that no one member had received all the clothing allowed ... The supply situation had existed for several month with no apparent attempt by the Commandant to ready it ... New arrivals had been housed for several days in poorly heated barracks, and had walked through rain and mud to class, mess, and the outside latrine before receiving any issue of protective military clothing and footwear.

Recruits also had been inappropriately assigned to long days of kitchen police and even twenty-five-hour duty keeping furnaces fueled. The result of this misuse of women's abilities was that several had to be discharged because of illness, and Strayhorn was sent in to clean up the mess. She did so, and when the Fort Oglethorpe training center closed at the war's end, in September of 1945, she was promoted to be WAC commandant at historic Fort Des Moines.

She served until May 29, 1946. Her highest rank was lieutenant colonel, not as serious an under-ranking as other female military leaders, and she was honored with the prestigious Legion of Merit. She had met her future husband while at Harvard, and after retirement, Lt. Colonel Elizabeth Strayhorn became Mrs. Joe Walsh. Like SPARS commander

Dorothy Stratton, also an academic, Strayhorn lived a long life: she died back in Nashville in her ninety-ninth year.

*See also:* **Daytona Beach; decorations; Des Moines, Fort; kitchen police; rank; Stratton, Dorothy; Women's Army Corps**

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### STREETER, RUTH CHENEY (1895–1990)

Ruth Cheney Streeter was a middle-aged woman who had never held a paying job when she became director of the Marine Corps Women's Reserve (MCWR), yet she did an excellent job of creating this corps from scratch—despite reluctance from male Marines to accept women.

Born to wealth in Brookline, Massachusetts, her peers elected her class president at Pennsylvania's prestigious women's college Bryn Mawr, but she completed only two years there before marriage and motherhood. She was one of twelve women recommended for the position by a committee headed by New York City activist Virginia Gildersleeve, and it did not hurt that Streeter's family was friendly with Navy Secretary Frank Knox. The same committee had chosen Mildred McAfee to head the Navy's WAVES, and the two were quite similar: pragmatic and maternal towards the young women under their command, they sometimes ignored rules to focus on the most practical way to accomplish their goals.

Almost three years prior to her commissioning, in 1940, Streeter had spoken in print of "German submarines sinking American ships a mile or two off the New Jersey shore, in plain sight of Atlantic City." With this motivation, she learned to fly and joined the Civil Air Patrol in 1941. There she discovered the discrimination against women in most paramilitary organizations: according to Marine Corps historian Mary Stremlow, men used Streeter's personally-owned plane, while "to her enormous frustration, she was relegated to the position of adjutant, organizing schedules and doing all the dirty work." She also was rejected five times by the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) because she was forty-seven, twelve years beyond the age limit. Even a personal appeal to its chief, Jacqueline Cochran, could not bend the rules.

Clearly motivated to help win the war, Streeter was sworn into the Marine Corps on January 29, 1943—but she was not the first. "A few weeks earlier," said Stremlow, "Mrs. Anne A. Lentz, a civilian clothing expert who had helped design the uniforms for the embryonic MCWR, was quietly commissioned with the rank of captain." That was just one rank beneath major, the rank assigned to Streeter. Reporters never questioned rank, however, when they announced unprecedented appointments of women, and Streeter was

described as the “wife of a prominent lawyer and businessman, mother of four including three sons in service and a fifteen-year old daughter, and actively involved for twenty years in New Jersey health and welfare work.”

Under-ranked though she was, Streeter moved to Washington, D.C., surrounded herself with an excellent team of similarly inexperienced but intelligent women, and set about creating the corps. Called the MCWR for Marine Corps Women’s Reserve, it also was referred to as “USMCWR” or more often, “WR” or simply “Women’s Marines.” It was the last of the new female military units, and probably because the Women’s Army Corps, the Navy’s WAVES, and the Coast Guards SPARS preceded it, Streeter never received the publicity—good and bad—that went to earlier women. She benefited from their experience, and part of that experience was to avoid publicity because it had so often turned negative. Major Streeter protected her personal privacy, too, including the fact that her Army Air Force brother was killed.

Her innate pragmatism could be seen in her willingness to send the new Women Marines to already established schools for WAVES and even the Women’s Army Corps. According to Army historian Mattie Treadwell, Streeter’s memo reasoned: “If the British ATS, the Canadian WAC, and the U.S. WAC have all had the same experience, it is only common sense for us to anticipate a similar situation.” Common sense is not necessarily common in the military, however, male Marine Corps officials overruled such inter-service cooperation.

Almost twenty thousand women joined the Marines under her leadership—but there could have been more. Unlike the WAC, which was led by Texan Oveta Culp Hobby, the women’s naval branches—all commanded by women from the North—were slow to accept African-American women. None were knowingly admitted into the Women Marines during Streeter’s tenure, despite an October 1944 Navy Department order to recruit blacks. She also limited her corps by suspending recruitment in areas where African-American and even blue-collar white women might be likely to enlist. In Macon, Georgia, for example, sociologist Kathleen Boom reported that a WR recruitment drive abruptly ended when local businessmen objected that too many (white) women were leaving their low-paid jobs to join the Marines.

Finally promoted to colonel early in 1944, Streeter resigned her commission on the anniversary of Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1945, and was awarded the Legion of Merit the following February. With former aide Katherine A. Towle replacing her, she returned to her home in Morristown, New Jersey. Ruth Cheney Streeter served as a member of that state’s constitutional revision commission in 1947 and lived a long life, dying at ninety-five. A granddaughter with the same name is a television documentary producer.

**See also:** African-American women; Civil Air Patrol; Cochran, Jacqueline; decorations; Gildersleeve, Virginia; Hobby, Oveta Culp; Marine Corps/Women Marines; McAfee, Mildred; rank; recruitment; underutilization; uniforms; WASP; WAVES; Women’s Army Corps

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## STRIKES

American women had shown their willingness to organize for economic goals since 1824, when they went on strike at the textile mills of Pawtucket, Rhode Island. Although an unfortunate number of labor union men continually promoted the myth that women could not be organized, the historical facts regularly contradicted that. Most working women have always understood that when employment conditions are unacceptable, democratic principles permit Americans to take action.

Fascism, on the other hand, is fundamentally anti-labor: a key point of its political agenda is to prohibit the organization of workers and elected union leaders who challenge the powerful. Nazi Germany banned unions and persecuted labor leaders; the same was even more true in other wartime nations with autocratic governments. Some right wingers in the United States also proposed compulsory labor during the war, using mechanisms as the 1942 Austin-Wadsworth Bill. Congress never accepted these ideas, however, and the wartime “ban” on strikes was not an emulation of fascism, but entirely voluntary.

Instead of imposed law, the no-strike policy was the result of workers and management coming together under the aegis of the government to declare that because production was so crucial to victory, strikes would be banned for the duration. It was what Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins called “a proxy promise” of union leaders on behalf of their members. Because there had been violent strikes just a few years earlier, the adoption of the strike ban was a genuine achievement that can be largely credited to Perkins.

Eleanor Roosevelt wrote, according to historian George Martin, that Perkins was “at her best [when] she quietly and with infinitely patience” laid the groundwork for the no-strike policy by arranging for the idea to come from the powerful men involved. Soon after Pearl Harbor, she held a conference of twelve representatives of defense industries and an equal number of labor leaders, six each from the American Federation of Labor (AFL) and the Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO). During a week-long session in Washington, D.C., they hammered out an agreement that unions

would not strike and management would not undercut unions with lockouts or other violations of protective labor laws that were adopted in the previous decade.

Specific worker grievances would be handed by a National War Labor Board, which President Franklin Roosevelt created by executive order on January 12, 1942. Although Perkins kept a low public profile with the creation of the no-strike policy, her close relationship with the president meant that she had a role in the make-up of the twelve member board, with four each from labor, management, and the public. None were women: Perkins' position as the first female Cabinet member was still sufficiently tenuous she took few feminist risks. Only two women served on the much larger War Manpower Commission, for example, even though its primary mission was to recruit workers, especially women, into the labor force. Indeed, the commission's name in itself illustrates the era's lack of feminist awareness.

Despite the cooperation of the AFL and CIO, some "wild-cat" strikes occurred. Many were based on racism, as whites objected to African Americans getting new jobs in defense plants. Perhaps the most shameful occurred in Baltimore, where black employees rose from 2% to 29% at a Western Electric plant in the first two years of the war. The strike began, said author Emily Yellin, when "twenty-two white women walked off their jobs at after one black woman was transferred into their formerly all-white department." Their objection focused on integrated toilet facilities, which previously had been segregated by race. When the War Labor Board ruled in favor of integration, "about 70 percent of the company's workers" struck, a percentage that included almost all white workers, both men and women. They were represented by an "independent" union that was not part of either major labor federation, and because the plant produced communication cables that were essential war materiel, Army troops took over the company for the first three months of 1944—until the company gave in to the white workers and re-segregated restrooms.

On the other hand, African-American women in the cigarette plants of North Carolina were leaders in another notable strike that violated the wartime ban. As with men in Detroit's auto factories in the 1930s, they conducted a "sit-down" strike—meaning that they occupied the factories and refused to leave, while also refusing to work. Cigarettes were part of soldiers' ration kits, with literally millions produced every day, and the work interruption was serious enough that the Labor Department quickly stepped in to settle their complaints.

Telephone operators also were overworked and struck for a few days in November 1944, but again, because wartime communication was so important, they also postponed their major issues until the war was over. Then, in 1946, almost a quarter-million phone workers went on strike. Indeed, pent-up grievances among both women and men were so severe that the immediate postwar period, from August 1945 to July 1946, brought almost daily headlines of strikes. Author Penny Colman counted "forty major strikes, each involving ten thousand or more workers" during that period.

During the war, however, Perkins and her staff did a laudable job of preventing strikes that impeded the production necessary to victory. Congress belatedly granted legal standing to the War Labor Board in 1943, but the no-strike ban was essentially voluntary—and effective. In the four years of the war, the time lost to strikes averaged approximately .003 days per year. It proved that Perkins was right to oppose "some rigid system" of mandatory labor, as Martin quoted her. Both compulsion and strikes proved unnecessary: "free American" workers outproduced "all the world's bound ... labor."

**See also: African-American women; cigarettes; defense industries; employment; enlistment standards; labor force; pay; Perkins, Frances; recruitment; telephone operators; unions; War Manpower Commission**

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## SULLIVAN, ALLETA (1895–1972)

Invariably called "Mrs. Thomas Sullivan" in the press, this midwestern mother famously lost five sons in World War II. She brought meaning to their deaths by traveling widely under the aegis of the Navy, rallying Americans to support war efforts.

Her five-member wartime household was composed of herself and her husband, their only daughter, Genevieve, as well as daughter-in-law Katherine Mary Sullivan and Katherine's two-year-old, Jimmy. The five brothers were George, Francis, Madison, Eugene, and Albert; they had grown up in a blue-collar family in Waterloo, Iowa, during the Great Depression. The brothers enlisted in the Navy and insisted on serving together, despite warnings of the grief this would cause their family if the ship went down.

They were in the Pacific Theater of Operations aboard the *USS Juneau*, when Japanese torpedoes hit the ship and it exploded during the battle of Guadalcanal in January 1943. The bad news broke for the family in painful increments, with unofficial information arriving more efficiently than official word. Alleta Sullivan later told *American Magazine*:

The way the news first came to me was through a neighbor who had received a letter from her son in the Navy saying,



"Isn't it too bad about the Sullivan boys? I hear their ship was sunk ...

About a week [later] ... someone knocked on our door at 7 o'clock in the morning ... We all went down in our bathrobes ...

Genevieve turned white and Katherine Mary looked as if she were going to collapse. I could hardly hold back the tears, but I wouldn't let myself cry in front of the three men ... I particularly wanted to comfort Katherine Mary. It was terribly hard on her, with Jimmy ...

In my first blind grief, it seemed as if almost everything I had lived for was gone. I couldn't eat or sleep ... I did find comfort in one thing they told me. I learned that everything had happened so fast that the boys must have died quickly and easily, without anguish or pain.

Unless there was incontrovertible evidence to the contrary, however, War Department officials virtually always offered that comfort to the bereaved. The quote also appears dubious in that it contradicted a *Life* report more than a year earlier, which included a letter sent to the Sullivans by one of the *Juneau*'s few survivors. A Nebraska sailor made it clear that George Sullivan did not die instantly: "It was a sad and pathetic sight to see George looking for his brothers, but all to no avail," he wrote. "I don't know whether this sort of letter helps or hurts you, but it's the truth."

In fact, according to historian Lisa Ossian, the ship's sailors were "abandoned for days by the Navy due to communication errors—men left to battle sharks, dehydration, and exposure." Not until the end of the twentieth century would the public finally learn that some of the 683 men who perished with the *Juneau* died in the days following the explosion, many from shark attacks. During the war, though, this hard reality was ignored. The preferred image was of noble sacrifice and a great victory, particularly in the 1944 movie, *The Fighting Sullivans*.

After a Catholic mass for the brothers on February 9, 1943, Alleta and Thomas Sullivan began touring for the Navy. They recruited sailors and soldiers, appeared at rallies to sell war bonds, and especially urged women to take jobs in defense industries. Even *Newsweek*, usually given to excessive cleverness and cynicism, wrote straightforwardly of the older Mrs. Sullivan, describing her as "stout and motherly looking. She wore a plain dress—one of the two she had brought with her on the long trip east." Despite any plainness, she proved an extraordinary motivator: production statistics rose measurably in defense plants after her speeches.

Daughter Genevieve joined the WAVES after her brothers' deaths, and although daughter-in-law Katherine did some appearances, she mostly stayed home with her child while her in-laws toured. She remarried in 1946 and insisted on maintaining the privacy of her new husband. On October 24, 1943, however, the front page of the *Waterloo Sunday Gazette* ran a photo of her and toddler Jimmy that was headlined

"Young Widow of Sullivan Brother Will Take Job in War Plant to 'Carry On.'" It detailed:

A mother at 17 and then widowed at 19 ... Mrs. Sullivan revealed here yesterday that she has been offered employment at the Waterloo Valve Spring Compressor Company, one of the city's industrial plants now in war production.

The son that was born to Albert and Katherine Sullivan ... now on his way to a third birthday, will continue to make his home with Mr. and Mrs. Thomas F. Sullivan, 98 Adams Street, when Mrs. Katherine Sullivan goes to work.

The Sullivans received personal letters from both Franklin and Eleanor Roosevelt, as well as many other famous people, and were covered in newspapers and magazines from coast to coast. Some people who also had major losses resented this attention, while others felt the Navy was exploiting their grief. Iowa writer John Satterfield concluded that local residents especially believed Alleta Sullivan "had deliberately sought the national publicity," and because of that, "for the rest of their years ... Tom and Alleta were less than completely welcome in Waterloo." Especially in the case of women, seeking publicity violated codes of midwestern modesty.

Alleta Sullivan doubtless believed, though, that she was doing what her sons would have wanted and making their sacrifice meaningful. More than that, as she met other mothers who also had lost children, her speeches began to have an edge of feminism. She emphasized that employment is good mental therapy for women, as well as for men. Not only did war work help end fascism, but while touring defense plants, she had observed that bereaved women who were employed coped better than those who remained housewives. Housework, she said, was too confining and isolated: it "allows your grief to remain very sharp, for there is nothing else for you to think about."

**See also:** bond sales; children/motherhood; defense industries; Gold Star Mothers; housework; magazines; Pacific Theater of Operations; recruitment; Roosevelt, Eleanor; widows; wives of servicemen

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## TEACHERS

Although it is one of the few professions closely associated with women, the field of education has a history of discrimination against its majority. Nor were women always the majority: in early America, the “schoolmaster” was axiomatically male, and the “schoolmarm” caught up with him only because the opening of a vast frontier meant that no “real man” would stay in the classroom. The one-room schoolhouse became a feminine domain, with male school boards choosing a new and probably young woman to teach for a few years prior to her true calling, marriage and motherhood. Although western states began electing women to their top education positions after 1892, most of the nation did not follow the example. Teaching was poorly paid, and compensation often was in the form of room and board: teachers lived in the homes of students, rotating between homes every few weeks. Especially in the Midwest, this was routine through World War I.

As late as World War II, marriage was a firing offense. To be sure, a Chicago woman successfully sued in 1901 to retain her job after marriage, but school boards were local and parochial and dominated by men, and the legal precedent was little known. Married women were hired only when no one else was qualified to teach in a particular field, and even then, were considered “substitutes” and paid less. It was a given, too, that full-time female teachers were paid less than male ones, with the usual ratio being twice as much for men.

Many teachers were not paid at all during the Great Depression of the 1930s: cash-strapped school boards instead issued “scrip” that local merchants might or might not recognize as legal tender. In Alabama, half of the schools simply closed, and an Arkansas school “year” was sixty days. Nor

was this limited to the South: both Detroit and Chicago failed to pay teachers for long periods of time during the 1930s and instead asked them to donate their services.

Thus the economic boom created by the 1939 outbreak of war in Europe had profound consequences for the American educational system. Thousands of teachers left their jobs for the higher pay in defense plants, and many others joined one of the new military services for women that began in 1942. According to Army historian Mattie Treadwell, a 1944 survey of officers in the Women’s Army Corps (WAC) showed that “over 20 percent were former teachers, with 16 percent being principals or teachers in universities or secondary schools.” Antoinette Boles was a teacher who left to join the WAC—but was disappointed in that experience, too, when instead of being assigned where her multi-lingual abilities could be used, she ended up doing menial hospital work in Alabama. The military could be guilty of such underutilization, but the number of successful WACs also showed that many teachers felt they had been underutilized in their former jobs. They were seeking better opportunity in the military, and especially the Navy’s WAVES made a point of recruiting educated women.

Although the overall teacher resignation rate from public schools was just 10 percent, that was significant—and it especially was a problem by locale. In Kentucky, for example, the giant Blue Grass Ordnance Depot paid much better wages, and so many teachers left their profession for it and other defense industries that some Kentucky schools could not open in 1943 because there were not enough teachers. The same was true in the boom towns where many of these former teachers went: as places such as Los Angeles and Seattle attracted tens of thousands of new residents, schools there faced huge enrollments at the same time that teachers

were resigning. Enough such change had occurred within the war's first year that writer Nona Baldwin cited the War Manpower Commission as "politely but forcefully" requesting "all former teachers ... [to] get back into harness."

Centuries of tradition on married women in the classroom disappeared almost overnight—although pregnant teachers, even if married, remained taboo to most school boards. The war also was responsible for raising the average pay of female teachers to nearly that of male ones, as local school boards discovered that they simply could not recruit enough teachers without raising women's pay.

Perhaps the biggest wartime change was the equalization of salaries between teachers in African-American schools with those in white schools. Racial segregation remained the rule during World War II, but the shortage of teachers meant that black educators in several states were able to successfully sue school boards and bring their salaries up to the same level as those of white teachers. Many of those courageous enough to file such suits faced such hostility that could not continue to teach in their local area, but other teachers benefited from their bravery. Future Supreme Court Justice Thurgood Marshall handled most of these cases for the NAACP, and the plaintiffs were more likely to be women than men. Filing such suits required courage, and after serving as one of Florida's five plaintiffs, Tampa's Hilda Turner spent the rest of her career teaching in Chicago.

The war also created non-traditional teaching opportunities. Women in the military often taught classes, frequently with all-male students. The military also sometimes hired civilian women to teach courses for some military occupational specialties (MOS), especially the fundamentals of math and science for cadets in the Army Air Force and the Navy. "Link Ladies," who trained pilots in flight simulation, often were former public school teachers. Working with adults gave many women a sense of esteem and leadership that they had not felt when they spent most of their time with children. If they returned to the public schools with the postwar baby boom, their wartime experience made them stronger.

Some school systems developed innovative "extended services," especially child care for preschoolers so that their mothers could take defense jobs. Schools almost always played a role in conservation and salvage efforts, and teachers were expected to help with war bond drives, particularly encouraging students to buy war stamps, a low cost version of lending money to the U.S. Treasury Department. High-school teachers in farming areas often worked with the Department of Agriculture and the Women's Land Army to meet the wartime labor shortage at harvest time.

Other issues can be seen in the pages of *Education for Victory*, a special wartime periodical for teachers and administrators that was published by the federal Bureau of Education. It was especially useful in expanding the horizons of counselors and teachers in terms of preparing girls for new careers that developed because of the war. Titles such as "Women are Welcome in Aviation" and "Education Directly Related to Duties of WAVE Personnel" encouraged educators

to encourage their female students to take courses in math and science, to expand beyond the traditional. "High School Girls Deny That 'Woman's Place is in the Home,'" a *Scholastic* title from the war's last year, spoke volumes.

Perhaps the single most surprising education-related event during the war years is that Atlanta voters elected a woman, Ira Jarrell, as the city's superintendent of schools in 1944. Her achievement was even more remarkable because, during her long teaching career, Jarrell also rose to the presidency of the local union, an affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers (AFT)—something that ordinarily would mean blacklisting in anti-union Georgia. She served successfully until her 1960 retirement, doubling the number of students enrolled and tripling the number of teachers.

The result of this and other wartime change was that the field of education never would be the same. After a bit of a postwar lull, women began taking much stronger roles in both the AFT and the National Education Association. They built real unions, sometimes went on strike, and began handling collective bargaining and contracts with school boards, which enforce gender and racial equality. Today is it not uncommon to have a majority of women on school boards who hire another woman as superintendent, while teachers often elect women to head their organizations.

*See also:* **adolescents; African-American women; bond sales; boom towns; child care; conservation; defense industries; Link Ladies; military occupational speciality; pay; postwar; recruitment; underutilization; War Manpower Commission; WAVES; Women's Army Corps; Women's Land Army**

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## TELEPHONE OPERATORS

Many women served in the military’s communication system, especially the Army Signal Corps, but they were much less numerous than the hundreds of thousands of women who worked as civilian telephone operators. Dialed phones were the exception in this era, not the rule: most people picked up their phone and heard not a dial tone, but instead a voice—almost always feminine—saying, “number, please?”

In countless small towns throughout the nation, she knew her customers; they knew her, and often referred to her as “central.” It was not unusual for operators in small towns to be on duty all hours of the day and night, as the switchboard often was in her home. She knew when a call came about a soldier missing in action, and who was on furlough, who was sick, who had been killed. Customers often asked the operator to pass on a message, and if bad news came in the night, it might be taken for granted that she knew who would want to be awakened.

In rural areas, “party lines” still prevailed, in which a half-dozen or more families shared a phone line. Each home had a distinctive ring tone—as, for examples, three short rings or two longs and a short—but the sound was heard by all on the line. If, for instance, the Johnson’s code rang in the night, it was not unusual for the Smiths and Joneses to assume that there was an emergency and pick up their phone to see what was wrong at the farm down the road. Private lines were limited to cities and to customers who paid a premium for them—which meant that if a soldier called a wife or sweetheart, she never could be sure who might be listening.

Hundreds of local phone companies were independently owned, and making a long-distance call always involved an operator connecting to operators employed by other phone companies. Area codes had yet to be established, and phone numbers often were a combination of numerals, letters, or even words. In most long-distance calls, the customer simply told the hometown operator the name and location of the person to be called: she then moved the call on to increasingly larger population centers, until it would be forwarded back down to another small town and the intended recipient. It was not unusual to be transferred several times before reaching the desired person, and customers simply listened to operators’ jargon until the desired voice finally came on the line. If no one answered, the process had to be repeated later—making it clear why so many phone operators were needed.

The International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers

(IBEW), which represented men in the telegraph industry, organized female phone operators in 1912—when there already were some seventh-five thousand women working at the job. Most who joined the union were city operators with genuine grievances. Unlike the small-town operator whose switchboard was in her home, women in city systems worked under strict supervision at a fast, impersonal pace: by the 1920s, they were expected to handle two hundred or three hundred calls per hour. Urban phone operators also came and went from the job at night—something often ignored by state “protective” labor laws.

Although phone companies had high expectations, they provided more training and better pay than other largely-female occupations. Partly because states regulated phone companies in exchange for exclusive franchises and partly because of unionization, the industry became a leader in worker education. Typical training for operators included proper grammar, business etiquette, and other topics that benefited a woman outside of her work world. Phone companies often provided relaxing rooms for breaks from this stressful job, and pay during the Great Depression of the 1930s was higher than average.

On the other hand, the emphasis on grammar and accents meant that no African-American women were hired until President Franklin Roosevelt’s implementation of the first affirmative action with World War II. Gloria Shepperson became the first known black employee of a phone company, after she filed suit against New Jersey Bell Telephone System in 1943. She used Roosevelt’s Executive Order # 8802, issued in 1941, which barred racial discrimination in companies with federal contracts. Shepperson ended up with a long career in the Bell System, eventually heading its Ethnic Affairs Department.

Probably because they were better paid than the average working woman, many phone operators were members of national organizations, especially Business & Professional Women (BPW). They did not receive the amount of media attention that other working women did, however, doubtless because women so thoroughly dominated this job category when interesting new non-traditional jobs opened during the war. BPW’s magazine, *Independent Women*, ran endless stories about the novel things women were doing, especially in defense industries, as well as many calls for badly-needed nurses. In the four years of the war, however, neither it nor other women’s magazines featured the additional stress on phone operators—who not only handled many more long-distance calls than in the past, but also knew that some of them brought the worst sort of news.

Because they were unionized, it was not unusual for phone operators to be better paid than nurses, teachers, and secretaries, all of whom had to invest their own money and time in earning the credentials to work. It was not terribly unusual for teachers to leave that profession for defense-industry jobs in World War II, but phone operators seldom left their jobs. If they followed their husbands to military camps or moved for other reasons, they almost always chose to work for the



WAC telephone operators trained and worked in extremely crowded and noisy conditions. *Courtesy of Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

new local phone company, as unions protected their right to re-employment in the industry.

Defense industries had to raise blue-collar pay to recruit the women needed during the war, however, and as those paychecks rose, phone operators fell in comparison. Despite rationing and price controls, the war brought inflation, and operators in Dayton, Ohio, went on strike in November, 1944—even though strikes were illegal during the war. Women in Detroit, Chicago, and Washington, D.C., joined them, but within a week, Labor Secretary Frances Perkins created an investigatory committee, and the women went back to work. Fifty-fives cases involving 180,000 operators were settled within a year, but postwar inflation brought a giant strike in 1946, when strikes were legal again. Some 230,000 phone operators walked off the job, and women were arrested in New Jersey and Chicago, but they won a wage increase. Communication Workers of America began in 1947, giving phone workers a choice between it and IBEW.

Many predicted high job loss in the postwar era, as phone systems automated to direct dialing. The unemployment crisis did not happen, however, as more people could afford telephones and businesses could afford additional lines. With union protection, many former operators switched to other forms of customer service. Phone companies and their unions, however, have been slow to gender-integrate job categories: telephones remain in indoor/outdoor world, with men typically doing installation and repair, while women work in customer service roles.

During World War II, though, that service often was much more personal. “Central” welcomed soldiers calling home and tried to ease devastating calls to mothers and widows. Even city operators went out of their way to assist the war’s many travelers, connecting them with Travelers Aid, the USO, and other helpful groups—usually composed of other women. Advertisements sometimes featured operators whose quick action saved a life, and many girls grew up thinking of the telephone operator as a model worthy of emulation.

**See also:** African-American women; Business & Professional Women’s Club; defense industries; electronics industry; employers/employment changes; inflation; magazines; nurses; pay; postwar; rationing; recruitment; Signal Corps; strikes; teachers; Travelers Aid; unions; USO; widows

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### THOMPSON, DOROTHY (1893–1961)

A brilliant feminist whose work merits more recognition, Dorothy Thompson was internationally known during World War II: some contemporaries ranked her second only to Eleanor Roosevelt in public influence.

Her first job after graduating from Syracuse University in 1914 was as a publicist for the New York Woman Suffrage Association; after New York women won the vote in 1917, she headed to Europe and World War I as a publicist for the Red Cross. There she made the transition to journalism, using her exceptional ability to obtain exclusive interviews with important people. At barely thirty years old, Thompson was the Central European bureau chief for New York and Phila-

delphia newspapers. From this vantage point, she watched the rise of fascism.

Thompson interviewed Hitler in 1931 and began publishing warnings on him immediately afterwards—years before most people were aware of the Nazi threat. They were sufficiently aware of her, however, that she was expelled from Germany in 1934. She nonetheless continued to express her opinions about the dangers of fascism, and within a few years, her columns were syndicated in more than 170 newspapers. She also lectured widely, did political commentary on radio, and wrote a tremendous number of articles for magazines ranging from the mainstream *Saturday Evening Post* to the scholarly *Foreign Affairs*.

Although she kept her maiden name, Thompson was married almost all of her adult life. A first marriage to a European from 1922 to 1927 ended in divorce, and the third, also to a European, was a happy relationship that lasted from 1943 to his 1958 death. Between them, from 1928 to 1942, she was married to Nobel-winning novelist Sinclair Lewis. Far from benefiting from his literary fame, however, she was diverted from her career by his alcoholism. She gave up the city life of publishing to buy a house in rural Vermont, where Lewis would be less tempted to drink. His best work was behind him, however, and he clearly plagiarized her anti-fascism work with his *It Can't Happen Here* (1935). Even conservative writer H.L. Mencken sympathized with “Mrs. Lewis” in her “heroic labors to keep his drinking within bounds.” Already in 1932, a decade before she filed for divorce, Mencken wrote that Thompson had given Sinclair “ten thousand dollars out of her own savings” to pay his debts.

Need for money probably was her major motivation for becoming the featured front-page columnist for *Ladies Home Journal* in 1937. The magazine was much more feminist than would be expected from its Victorian name, though, and Thompson used its pages to write thoughtfully about world problems and especially the war that began in Europe in 1939. She also experienced it on a personal level: in addition to bearing Lewis’ son at age thirty-seven, she was a devoted stepmother to his son—who was killed in the war that she tried to prevent with her early warnings.

Thompson was especially insightful on the economy and women’s place in it. She crusaded for child care and wrote thoughtfully of wives of servicemen. More presciently, she understood the long-term implications of women’s entrance into the wartime labor force and foresaw a future that many professional economists missed. “The trends,” she wrote in 1944, “inescapably indicate [that women] in their quiet and ladylike way, are going to produce nothing short of a social revolution ... in the not-too-distant future. Employers, labor organizations, government, and social agencies should take note.”

The conservatism of the postwar era negatively affected her, as did her ability to foresee issues that were not popular at the time, including the plight of Arabs. Newspapers increasingly dropped her column, but she nonetheless published

*The Courage to Be Happy* (1958). Dorothy Thompson was sixty-eight years old when she died suddenly in Lisbon, still seeking a fresh angle on the world’s news.

**See also:** child care; correspondents, war; magazines; postwar; radio; Red Cross; Roosevelt, Eleanor; wives of servicemen

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### “TOKYO ROSE” (1916–2006)

Americans used “Tokyo Rose” for several English-speaking women who broadcast on radio from Japan. Their programs were designed to attract the attention of soldiers in the Pacific Theater of Operations: popular music was interlaced with demoralizing commentary from a feminine voice that sounded like the proverbial girl next door. They not only told soldiers that the United States was losing the war, but also aimed to hurt self-confidence in a more personal way by encouraging men to think that their wives and girlfriends likely were unfaithful. The same thing happened in the European Theater of Operations, but the chief woman there, Mildred Gillars (“Axis Sally”), was a genuine fascist who begun her propaganda early and willingly.

The woman most identified with “Tokyo Rose” was IkuoTorguri. Her father, Jun Torguri, had immigrated to the United States in 1899 and her mother in 1913. She was born soon thereafter, grew up in Los Angeles, and gave herself the first name of “Iva.” A good student, she earned a zoology degree from the University of California at Los Angeles in 1940, and in July of 1941 went to visit relatives in Japan. She was allowed to sail without a passport, and in September, Torguri went to the American embassy and requested one so that she could return to her native land. The paperwork was still underway on December 7, 1941, when Japan bombed Hawaii’s Pearl Harbor; after Congress declared war the next day, the twenty-five year old could not come home.

Torguri supported herself by working for a Tokyo news service; this led to radio news, which led to the broadcasting that she began in November 1943. She used the name of “Orphan Ann” (“or Annie”) and did a half-hour show on



weekdays; other women did the same in other time slots. English-speaking people who were similarly trapped in Japan said later that they enjoyed her “Zero Hour” and that it consisted largely of music. Some prisoners of war in Japan also remembered that she sometimes used language so absurdly wrong that listeners would understand that she was broadcasting under duress.

On April 19, 1945, just before the end of the war in Europe, Iva Torguri married a Portuguese citizen who also had Japanese ancestors, Felipe Aquino. (Some sources use “D’Aquino” or “d’Aquino.”) The U.S. embassy was closed, of course, but the couple registered their marriage with the Portuguese embassy; Portugal officially was neutral in World War II. The new bride did not accept Portuguese citizenship and made a point of refusing to renounce her American citizenship.

When American troops occupied Japan in September 1945, they soon tracked down the woman that the press had dubbed “Tokyo Rose.” She co-operated with authorities, who determined that she was innocent within a month, and she re-applied for her passport to return to the United States. Right-wing columnist Walter Winchell, however, was outraged to think that “Tokyo Rose” would escape punishment, and he led a persistent media campaign to force the FBI and the Justice Department to investigate further. In September 1948, a federal grand jury in San Francisco indicted Aquino.

If her trial had not been held in California, where there was a long history of bias against Japanese Americans, it is possible that she could have demonstrated her innocence, but press coverage was one-sided, and she was brought to the United States under armed guard as though already convicted. Held at California’s Sugamo Prison, Aquino had no access to good defense lawyers in her trial for treason, which ran from early July to late September of 1949. In the end, though, jurors convicted her of just one minor count: her “treason” consisted of speaking on the radio about the loss of American ships. The judge nonetheless sentenced her to ten years in prison and a \$10,000 fine. She spent more than six years in the federal prison for women at Alderson, West Virginia, but was paroled in 1956.

Upon her release, Aquino quietly worked in her family’s Chicago store. In the 1970s, when Japanese Americans were able to organize and protest their wartime internment, her case was included among many injustices. Former prisoners of war came forward to support her, saying that they had realized she was broadcasting under duress, and most important, a witness against her revealed that he had been bribed by the prosecution. President Gerald Ford issued a formal pardon in 1977, and some veterans organizations recognized the injustice done to Iva Torguri Aquino prior to her death on September 26, 2006.

**See also:** Axis Sally; European Theater of Operations; Japanese-American women; occupied Japan; Pacific Theater of Occupations; Pearl Harbor; prisoners of war; radio

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## TRAVEL

America never has seen population migration equal to that of the four years of World War II, when one in every five people moved, often to temporary “homes.” Most traveled by bus and train: only a few officials flew, as planes and pilots were needed overseas. Because gas and tires were rationed, travel for leisure became virtually nonexistent.

Thus most travel was on public transportation—and most vehicles remained under the control of men. Bus drivers, train engineers, and city streetcar conductors were exclusively male, and even service workers on trains continued to be men, usually African Americans. A few women drove taxis in some cities, notably uniformed Yellow Cab drivers in Philadelphia, but in other places, women found that cab driver unions could not comprehend that a woman would use her taxi for anything other than prostitution. Indeed, less than a century had passed since travel by an unescorted woman was taboo—something that changed because of the Civil War.

Both local and long-distance transportation systems were crowded, and women spent a great deal of time waiting. Public transit was new to Coralee Redmond, a North Dakota woman who moved to Tacoma, Washington, where she, her husband, and two daughters worked in shipyards. Others of her nine children were in the military, and she had real stress in her life, but according to interviewer Roy Hoppes, she recalled that “the only resentment I ever had was having to wait for a bus.” In addition to working full-time and keeping house, Redmond also squeezed in some volunteer work and said: “The main thing that bothered me was the many hours I felt I wasted waiting for buses because the buses would be so loaded. One would go by, and you’d [have to] wait for another one.” Nothing could be done about this, though, as



U.S. Army nurses and soldiers waving farewell as a troop ship leaves the pier.  
*Courtesy of Library of Congress*

metal and rubber were much too precious to be used for new civilian transit.

She was somewhat unusual in being middle aged, and certainly most long-distance travelers were young. Many were unaccustomed to travel: they had grown up in the Great Depression and often carried all their possessions in just a suitcase or two. These travelers fell into three main categories: defense workers moving to new jobs; soldiers traveling between duty stations or furloughs; and “camp following” wives intent on joining their soldier at his training camp. The military discouraged the latter, and travel for them was the most difficult.

“Lacking any official traveling status,” *Time* reported in 1943, “the service wife is at the bottom of the transportation heap; even when she can afford better accommodations, she must usually expect to wind up in coach, possibly sitting on her suitcase in the aisle” of the train. Yet women traveled thousands of miles under these conditions, some of them carrying a baby or two, along with cloth diapers, milk bottles, and other of the era’s paraphernalia. One even carried her husband’s favorite cake all the way from Oregon to Missouri. Camp follower Barbara Klaw detailed the emotional effect of official travel priorities:

I noticed a sign at the train gate, saying ...“Servicemen will board all trains before civilians.” A fine idea, no doubt, but multiplied a hundred times—servicemen will get in diners first, servicemen will have first crack at sandwiches sold on trains, servicemen will have first choice of hotel rooms—it made me feel like an excessively useless object, or a member of a persecuted class.

Like these wives of servicemen, Sally Knox had no travel priority, even though she worked in procurement at an Ohio air base. Between Dayton and St. Louis, she told Hoppes, “there was a nice train ... called the *Jeffersonian*, and it had all reserved seats. That is, it was supposed to have, but it was just mobbed with people. People sitting in the aisles and standing up, and they served two or three meals a day... I got

in line for breakfast and waited for hours and finally got my breakfast—and went right back in line to wait for lunch.”

Although surprisingly few women worked in the dining cars or kitchens of trains, railroads did hire women—often African Americans—to clean both the interior and exterior of trains. The latter was especially difficult toil, as women sprayed water on to locomotives in unheated train yards. Railroads (and their unionized employees) were slow to hire women for jobs that they could have done as well as men, especially reservation and ticket sales.

In fact, it may be that the greatest number of women who worked aboard trains were not railroad employees, but nurses. Hospital trains in both Europe and America carried long lines of cars with wounded soldiers stacked in bunk beds, and both Army and Navy nurses cared for them as trains brought them on the long journey from battlefield to hospital to home. Mary Jane Kohlenberg of one such train in France, soon after the European war ended: it was composed of “several dilapidated coaches minus windows, etc., but contain[ed] wooden benches for seats.”

That made train travel in America seem luxurious, but knowing others were worse off did not necessarily ease frustrations—and it also was probable that a journey’s end brought new problems. Motel chains did not yet exist; hotels had few vacancies; and countless female travelers were akin those featured by *Collier’s* in San Francisco:

The hotels put out cots in the halls or let them sleep sprawled uncomfortably in the chairs in the lobby. One hotel not only lets them sleep in the lobby, but provides the women with pillows, and when the first guests check out in the morning, the stranded ladies are invited up to the vacant rooms to freshen up and have a bath free of charge.

Such charity was atypical, though, and any wartime travel involved hardships. The USO and Travelers Aid used local networks to help, and military women especially benefited from a network that told them where to go and what to expect. Nona Johnson, for example, served in the Marine



Captain Madeline Pauls, chief nurse aboard the US Army hospital ship *Algonquin*, transports Al—a “special patient” smuggled aboard—in her “Mae West” life vest, 1944. *Courtesy of Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

Corps in Washington, D.C., and went to New York as often as she could. She wrote that “many” of the city’s “fashionable apartment complexes had accommodations for service women, dormitory style at 50 cents a night.” That, of course, would not be open to a civilian woman, even if she happened to hear of the practice.

Travel was especially difficult for African-American women. Trains had segregated cars, and black people were expected to ride at the back of buses—where diesel fumes were worse. (The majority of travelers also smoked cigarettes in this era, too, further polluting bad air.) Depots in the South had separate waiting rooms, and those for blacks were decidedly inferior; even in the North, many facilities had “colored” restrooms and drinking fountains, and few quality hotels anywhere in the nation accommodated them. Black women simply had to depend on internal networks and empathetic workers with Travelers Aid or the YWCA. The latter provided facilities for African-American women

in several major cities, but finding a room for the night in small towns or rural areas was problematic.

Both black and white women of that era dressed up for traveling. All women wore skirts and hose in that era, and most added heels, hats, and gloves—a cultural demand that made travel more difficult. Fabric was not yet permanent press, and clothes wrinkled after long hours on the train or bus. For new military recruits, it was a particular shock to discover that their journey would end in a truck. Two traditions clashed: military tradition dictated that enlisted personnel rode on benches in the backs of trucks, while older tradition dictated that women wore skirts. Especially at Fort Des Moines, the first training camp for non-nursing military women, reporters eager to write about this new phenomenon featured photographs of women in heels and hats awkwardly climbing out of truck beds. The problem continued even after they switched from civilian clothing, as the standard uniform for all women’s corps was a skirt, not pants, and standard transport was by truck.

Defense plants generally encouraged women to wear pants, but being cognizant of the era’s standards, they also often provided changing rooms so that an employee could change into a dress before she caught the streetcar or bus. Like the military, munitions plants often recruited young women to move to towns where bombs, shells, and other ammunition was manufactured; these usually were in rural areas where an accidental explosion would do the least harm. Such women, too, arrived in groups on chartered buses. Once there, they were stuck: very few women owned cars in that era, and there was little public transportation in towns such as Elkton, Maryland, or Childersburg, Alabama. They lived a bored existence in dormitories or rented rooms, rarely getting a chance to go anywhere.

In contrast, traveling overseas was a new experience for almost all of the millions who sailed on troop ships. Except for the all-male, semi-civilian Merchant Marine that carried vital supplies, only military vessels were at sea: there was no international tourism during World War II, and airplane travel was restricted to top officials. Each transport was extremely valuable, and sailing plans were kept secret until long after departure. Strict censorship rules meant that no phone calls were permitted, as everyone knew that “loose lips sink ships.” Most troop transports traveled in the center of a convoy, with armed ships outermost and as much surveillance as possible to avoid mines and submarines that might be lurking underneath. Indeed, even before the United States entered the war, American women working for the Red Cross and other groups had been aboard the *Maasdam* and other ships sunk by enemy fire.

Because there was so much invested in a convoy, troop ships were incredibly crowded, but men—who were the vast majority—typically fared much worse than women. The Navy Nurse Corps, for example, was composed entirely of officers, and their onboard quarters were appreciably more spacious than those of enlisted men, who often slept on deck in triple-stacked hammocks. Women in other naval branches





These women are leaving Virginia's Camp Patrick Henry, the first step to overseas travel. Those in the foreground are civilian war correspondents. *Courtesy of National Archives*

were not permitted to go overseas, but the Army Nurse Corps and the Women's Army Corps (WAC) did from the very beginning. The first WACs to arrive in North Africa landed under especially traumatic conditions and went to work immediately, with no post-travel rest.

Selene Wiese was a WAC who left San Francisco not knowing where she was bound, and the trip to Oro Bay, Papau, New Guinea, turned out to be a twenty-seven-day voyage: "We were at sea far longer than the trip would normally have taken," she said, "because we zigzagged all over the Pacific to avoid Japanese submarines." She was a Motor Pool driver, and, when transferred from the Philippines, she opted out of crowded WAC quarters to sleep under "her" army truck on the open deck:

The trip was a long one ... because when you travel in convoy you don't go any faster than the slowest ship. I don't know when we arrived in Manila. I know that I was aboard the ship on the 12th of April, when President Roosevelt died.

One night as I was rolled up in my blankets under the truck it rained so hard that my blankets acted like a down spout and I suddenly found that I was soaking wet. I had kept my books on the wheel of the vehicle so they were away from the rain. The next day I took the blankets out and hung them to dry on the hood.

At the war's end, she joined millions of others, mostly men, who waited for trains and ships to take them to demobilization and home. Other ships carried war brides, foreign women who married soldiers and became Americans. As defense plants returned to producing civilian goods, cars would become more affordable than in the prewar era—and travel never would be the same.

*See also:* **Army Nurse Corps; camp followers; censorship; cigarettes; defense industries; demobilization; Des Moines, Fort; dress; European Theater of Operations;**

**fatalities; hospitals; Maasdam; Motor Pools; munitions; Navy Nurse Corps; North Africa; Pacific Theater of Operations; postwar; recruitment; Red Cross; shipyards; Travelers Aid; uniforms; unions; USO; war brides; wives of servicemen; Women's Army Corps; YWCA**

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### TRAVELERS AID

The idea of aiding travelers in an organized way began in St. Louis, "the gateway to the west," with an 1851 bequest from a former mayor. It was Grace Hoadley Dodge, however, who took the concept nationally in 1907, when she merged several New York City charities shortly before her 1914 death. Dodge, who never married, was a member of a wealthy but liberal family; she lived on Madison Avenue and invited progressives into her home to plan projects such as the

city's Working Woman's Association and Teachers College of Columbia University. She also was a leader in the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), which had decades of experience in this area.

The year 1907, when Dodge consolidated the city's disparate efforts for travelers, was also the year that Ellis Island welcomed its greatest number of immigrants, but immigration plummeted with the 1914 outbreak of war in Europe. Travelers Aid thus developed its focus on Americans who happened to be away from home and down on their luck. Its volunteers typically assisted people who had lost their money and needed to send a telegram or make a long-distance phone call; with a donated budget, it bought meals and bus tickets for stranded strangers. Not surprisingly, most of the volunteers who listened to sojourners' misfortunes and solved their problems were women.

World War II, of course, brought millions of travelers, as 20 percent of the nation's population migrated to new jobs in defense plants or were assigned to military posts thousands of miles from their homes. Travelers Aid was part of the six-member coalition that began the USO (United Services Organizations) in 1941, but it maintained its independent identity as a secular organization that focused on both men and women (unlike the YWCA, which also was part of the USO.) Technically named the National Travelers Aid Association, it invariably was called simply "Travelers Aid."

By the war's end, it had established some 175 "troop transit lounges" in or near bus and train stations, where servicemen could relax between segments of trips. The most important function of volunteers at Travelers Aid desks, though, was dispensing advice on the local area, especially where one might get a hotel room or an affordable meal. The organization served both soldiers and civilians, and the enormity of its work can be seen in a *Time* report that Travelers Aid handled a million cases in just the first half of 1943. Many of these travelers never had been far from home, and some from rural areas were unfamiliar with public transportation and dialed phones.

Travelers Aid women usually were older than those they assisted, and they especially took a motherly attitude

towards "camp followers," the term for servicemen's wives who followed their husbands to training camps. Aid workers comforted young mothers and crying babies who waited in bus stations; they helped people seeking other people in big cities; they provided maps and advice on safe and unsafe parts of town. A few urban Travelers Aid facilities even offered babysitting so that couples who had not seen each other in months or years could enjoy a night on the town. Travelers Aid also made a point of recruiting African-American women who assisted African-American soldiers in this segregated era.

Most outreach was completed in a matter of minutes, but some cases became complicated. Transient people got sick and could not travel, and Travelers Aid workers had to find a place for them in the era's overcrowded hospitals. They helped locate scarce housing in boom towns near defense industries and military bases, and they assisted newcomers with exploitive landlords or other residents who resented the strangers in their towns. Although it was not an employment agency, it also was common for Travelers Aid workers to help camp followers find jobs.

Often the only local "friend" that a stranger had, Travelers Aid workers contributed immensely to the smooth migration of millions of Americans. Although their stations now are as likely to be in airports as in bus stations, Travelers Aid volunteers still quietly make strangers feel at home; their modern emphasis is on teenage runaways.

**See also:** African-American women; boom towns; camp followers; defense industries; hospitals; housing; landlords; travel; USO; volunteers; YWCA

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## UNDERUTILIZATION

The war offered women new opportunities, but not surprisingly, long habits that underutilize women's abilities did not end in those four years. Female pilots may be the best example: despite worldwide respect for such models as Amelia Earhart, experienced women were limited to what aviator Jacqueline Cochran called "aerial dishwashing." Women in the Civil Air Patrol, the Women's Air Ferrying Squadron (WAFS), and the Women's Airforce Service Pilots (WASP) were not allowed to fully use their skills. Louise Thaden of Bentonville, Arkansas for example, was so distinguished an aviator that she defeated Earhart in the first Women's Air Derby, but because she had two children by World War II, she was not permitted to use her skills in the military. A clear case of underutilization, Thaden volunteered in the best available alternative; she was exceptional in rising to lieutenant colonel in the unpaid Civil Air Patrol.

Discrimination and therefore underutilization also was the written policy in other military services. Emma Jane Burrows Windham, for example, had flown since age twelve, studied aeronautical engineering at the University of California, ferried bombers to Alaska, and trained both male and female pilots. The best use that the Women's Army Corps (WAC) could make of these credentials was aircraft maintenance. She joined the WAC because, unlike any other female non-nursing branch, it permitted her to go overseas; she went to England and earned a Purple Heart during 1944 buzz bombing there. Probably because her male peers valued her ability, she was one of a three-member bomber crew when it fatally collided with a cargo plane. According to Colonel Mary Lave, Windham's rank at death remained a lowly private first class.

Most military women were similarly eager to go overseas.

The WAC won that right when it formed, and many of the Navy's WAVES enlisted because their commander, Mildred McAfee, also promised that "women will be sent overseas." The front-page *New York Times* story was repeated by recruiters, but Congress never passed the authorizing legislation. WAVES understandably felt betrayed and underutilized.

Yet WACs in the European Theater of Operations also found themselves unable to use their training. Army historian Mattie Treadwell said:

Several WAC officers attended the British Staff College in a class with British women officers, but an assignment adequate to justify this high-level training could not be found. Wacs who had graduated from the Army's own Command and General Staff School were assigned to jobs such as photo interpretation ... In spite of a War Department letter prohibiting the employment of WAC officers as stenographers, aides, and chauffeurs, by the end of the war ... 14% were serving as personal assistants to ranking officers in the European theater.

Although men in the military also sometimes were misassigned, the problem appeared more real for women. Cases were uncovered of WACs being used as babysitters and personal servants; other WACs strongly resented assignment as escorts on ships that brought war brides to America. Although WAC director Oveta Culp Hobby generally succeeded in keeping her women out of kitchens and laundries, other Army officers saw that—and the typewriter—as the natural place for women.

The Army Medical Corps was especially bad about making "mop commandoes" out of women who, for example, were lab or x-ray technicians, and countless WACs complained that the all-female Army Nurse Corps (ANC) mistreated Medical Corps WACs. Because ANC members





This one woman among many men is typical of all too many governmental meetings—even when the issue being discussed affected women more than men, as in this meeting at the Office of Price Administration. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

were axiomatically officers, some behaved in superior ways that caused demoralization and underutilization of WACs. Anne Bosanko Green was typical: a WAC surgical technician who had studied science at the University of Minnesota, letters to her parents show her losing her motivation because of this problem:

“Sadist-ky,” our stinker chief nurse ... proceeded to give us a one-hour lecture, completely uncalled for ... She’s been picking on us, making slimy personal cracks, and riding and nagging us till at the end of the day we were wrecks ... None of the kids, fellows and us, can stand it up in Surgery ... The atmosphere is so tense that it’s impossible ... Why a bunch of adult women can’t do the job that they were trained to do, in peace, and without being treated like juvenile delinquents at reform school, I do not know.

In referring to her peers as “kids,” she made another point on underutilization. She had to wait to enlist until she was twenty, and age—on both the low and high ends—was another limitation. All of the services required higher enlistment standards for women than for men, and yet failed to use those achievements. Cases abound—and often were reported unconsciously, by writers whose assumption of a secondary place for women was so complete that they did not notice what should have been the point. Even *Independent Woman*, the most feminist of the era’s magazines, adopted this attitude in a 1943 article on WACs going overseas. Intended to be flattering about them and their “professional skills,” it featured a journalist who had covered the Japanese invasion of China—and without seeing this underutilization, said that she was “chief cook.”

Another female reporter wrote cheerfully for the *Christian Science Monitor* of a woman who held a 28,000-foot record for parachute jumping; she spent the war packing parachutes for inexperienced men, and at its end, still was a private. Rank offered demonstrable evidence of discrimination, which in-

evitably resulted in underutilization. None of founders of the military’s female units, for instance, were given the rank they merited for the executive ability they displayed, and they were underutilized as postwar consultants. McAfee, Hobby, and the others went back to private life, and the military largely failed to use their hard-earned knowledge for the postwar period.

The War Department also rejected female physicians until women’s organizations lobbied Congress to force their utilization. Again, though, news reports failed to give readers the full picture: when the Marine Corps promoted its first female physician, the *New York Times* did not mention that her rank of sergeant was much lower than it should have been. It went on to say, again without comment, that prior to her 1943 enlistment, this physician worked at the War Department—as a secretary.

Women did get wonderful new opportunities in journalism, especially as war correspondents, but the knowledge that they obtained was underutilized. Neither the State Department nor the War Department contacted women such as Irene Corabally Kuhn and Agnes Smedley, who had long experience in prewar Asia; even well-known China expert Pearl Buck was ignored. Margaret Bourke-White, Martha Gellhorn, and Sonia Tomara had a more accurate understanding of Nationalist China than most officials, but the honest assessments of such women were not heeded. Government officials could have understood European enemies better by listening to female journalists such as Josephine Herbst and Sigrid Schultz. Dorothy Thompson, whose personal knowledge of Hitler also was underutilized, raged:

Sigrid Schultz, for twenty years *Chicago Tribune* correspondent in Berlin, is sitting in Westport, Connecticut. She has unaccountable German and other European connections, speaks German, French, and Swedish, and why she is not in [neutral] Sweden collecting data on Germany from the Germans who come and go from there is beyond me.

The same was true for dozens other women who had lived abroad and had contacts that could have been beneficial to the new Office of Strategic Services and other agencies. Nor could male officials say that they did not know of the existence of such women, as even Eleanor Roosevelt made constant recommendations. Too often, though, the response to her prodigious networking was akin to that of Joseph P. Kennedy, then ambassador to Britain, who complained that the embassy should not be bothered by the “poor little nobodies” that the first lady recommended. It apparently never occurred to him that these “nobodies” might have recently fled from fascism and had information that could prove priceless.

Even “Rosie the Riveter” followed the pattern of underutilization. Defense industry quickly discovered that were women capable of many blue-collar jobs and that they performed some better than men, yet these women were not promoted or encouraged. Josephine von Miklos was just one who found that she had intuitive mechanical aptitude, but she learned to hide that from hostile male co-workers. Not surprisingly, women also were under-represented and underutilized in labor unions and with bodies such as the misnamed War Manpower Commission. Although the Roosevelt administration was much better about utilizing women’s abilities than any previous one, a 1942 tabulation of women in policy-making posts by *Independent Woman* found just two of 401; by 1944, the appalling ratio had risen to eight of 537.

Even in fields that were traditionally female, women’s expertise was not used. Home economics was by definition a woman’s area, but not one home economist or dietician was included on the War Food Administration’s board that determined nutritional needs for rationing; the entire body was composed of male MDs. *U.S. News* followed the same mind-set in 1946 study of worldwide famine and food rationing. Its two-part report included the views of leaders in churches, labor, business, and government—but not one woman. This postwar article was more regressive than a pre-war *Newsweek* report, which noted women’s underutilization even with volunteer work:

In most of this patriotic activity, women have been on the outside looking in. A few have found outlets ... in Red Cross work and the entertainment of soldiers, but thousands of others have been unable to find constructive ways of aiding national defense. When women’s organizations have asked what their members could do, they have usually been put off with vague talk about ... doing their everyday tasks with more efficiency. Indicative of the national defense program’s lack of interest ... is the fact that in the whole defense set up, there are only seven women with policymaking jobs.

Perhaps the largest group to be overlooked in the call for volunteers and workers was the wives of servicemen. They had special motivation to win the war, but hundreds of thousands remained unproductive because there was no coordination of their labor with proximity to their husbands’ military installations. Only a lack of imagination explains the failure to utilize such place-bound women. Buses might

have taken them en masse to war plants, where they could have worked assembly line jobs that required little training. Instead of endless recruitment for the WAC or other military services, classes might have been set up on the posts where husbands were assigned and women trained to do the work that the military needed. Yet even in cities with a surplus of servicemen’s wives and a shortage of workers, there was no systematic plan to tap this potential labor pool.

The contradiction between words and action hit Barbara Klaw when she left the Office of War Information (OWI) to follow her husband to a Missouri camp. Because she had written OWI press releases encouraging women to join the war effort, she tried hard to find a way to effectively use her time, with or without pay. Men at the local US Employment Service, however, were so unaware of the official cry for female labor that she gave up. Not only did they lack any knowledge of war-related programs such as the Women’s Land Army, they also were rude in their rejection. She concluded, “I felt like apologizing personally to every person who had ever read my appeals.”

Susan B. Anthony II cited many examples of underutilization in her 1943 book, but perhaps the most compelling was that of Dr. Grace Langdon, who created the New Deal’s child care program. Anthony raged that Langdon was passed over for director of wartime child care and the post given to an inexperienced young man. He soon left for the military—and the mistake was repeated with “another man who had even less experience.” She concluded: “I don’t want to sound immoderately feminist,...but Dr. Langdon was the *only* qualified person for the job in the entire Federal Government. Failure to appoint her was clear-cut discrimination illustrating the mental blocks in the minds of our top male officials.” Not only was it discriminatory, it was a stupid waste of everyone’s time in trying to resolve an important issue.

Finally, although they also had new opportunities because of the war, it remained a given that academic women, including those in scientific research and development, would be underutilized. Gerty Radnitz Cori, for example, shared the 1947 Nobel Prize for Medicine with her husband—just two years after the war ended, which she spent working as an unpaid researcher. Author Kathleen Broome Williams summarized underutilization well in her study of female scientists:

World War II rhetoric strongly deplored a national shortage of scientists and eagerly sought to find women with scientific training, but the truth seems to be that even highly qualified women were usually welcome only at the lowest positions, especially in industry. Women were recruited to teach science in universities, but when peace arrived the briefly suspended anti-nepotism rules that prevented spouses from working at the same institutions were reinstated ... Even during the war, in both industry and academia, men were promoted and women only filled in the gaps.

**See also: Army Nurse Corps; Bourke-White, Margaret; British women; Buck, Pearl; child care; Civil Air Patrol; Cochran, Jacqueline; correspondents, war; decorations;**

defense industries; dieticians; enlistment standards; European Theater of Operations; fatalities; food shortages; Gellhorn, Martha; home economics; Langdon, Grace; magazines; Marines, Women; McAfee, Mildred; Office of War Information; physicians; rank; rationing; recruitment; Red Cross; Roosevelt, Eleanor; “Rosie the Riveter”; scientific research and development; Smedley, Agnes; Thompson, Dorothy; unions; volunteers; WAFS: war brides; War Manpower Commission; WASP; wives of servicemen; Women’s Army Corps (WAC); Women’s Land Army

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## UNIFORMS

Everyone who wanted to wear a uniform during World War II had a chance to do that—and most people, men and women, seemed to have that desire. Almost every organization, both military and civilian, had at least one uniform and often several: in addition to winter and summer fabrics, a variety of styles were available for different activities. Within the military alone, a corps’ uniforms varied from formal dress for military balls to the seersucker “peanut suit,” as Marine Corps women called their beige, bloomer-legged leisure outfit.

Sewing various uniforms was, in fact, one of the biggest wartime occupations of women, as garment factories pro-

duced hundreds of millions of uniform items. Their work was so traditional for women that they got almost no media attention, but their contribution to the war was huge. Women sewed everything from jackets and pants to caps and arm badges; they ran the machines that knitted socks and sewed shoes and seamed leather bags. The factories in which most worked were private but held federal contracts, frequently with the Quartermaster Corps of the Army and the Navy, which limited owners’ profits and ensured worker rights. Most were represented by unions, especially the International Ladies’ Garment Workers’ Union and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, which won huge pay increases for these women when non-traditional defense industries began to compete for their labor.

For the military, the point of uniforms was to be uniform: to impose a visual sense of both anonymity and belonging, making it clear that the corps, not the individual, was what mattered. In war, it was important to be able to immediately grasp who a person was and where she/he stood in the hierarchy. At a glance, for example, it was clear if a woman was a Coast Guard SPAR or in the Navy Nurse Corps. Brass adornments showed if she was a member of the commanding “brass,” while ribbon and medal decorations gave a quick summary of her career.

The importance of a military uniform can be seen in the difficulties encountered by those who lacked them. The most striking example is the Women’s Air Ferrying Squadron (WAFS) and (initially) the Women’s Airforce Service Pilots (WASP), who were not granted the privilege of a uniform. Those female pilots ran into almost daily difficulty, especially at airports, because there was no easy way for them to quickly show that they were not civilians and that their requests should be taken seriously. The commanders of the new corps, too, were not initially granted the right to wear a uniform, hardly a way to inspire public confidence in the innovation.

From previous wars, recruiters understood the importance of uniforms as an emotional symbol. Their advertising showed the variety of uniforms even within one corps, probably hoping that if one did not appeal, another might. The Army Nurse Corps (ANC), for example, sometimes portrayed nurses in their dress uniforms, in which an ANC member could scarcely be differentiated from a member of the Women’s Army Corps (WAC) or the Navy’s WAVES, but it also used more traditional nurses’ uniforms. Some were dramatically placed to evoke feelings: in one of the most powerful, a woman wore an old-fashioned nurse’s cap and cape, with dark clouds and devastated buildings behind her. Its caption emphasized, “Nurses Are Needed Now!”

That skirted image, however, revealed its impracticality early in the war, when without waiting for authorization from Washington, ANC nurses trapped in the jungles of Bataan began wearing pants instead of dresses. According to ANC historian Edith Aynes, some older ANC officers long resisted the change to pants. “Reports reached this office,” said one chastising memo, “to the effect that nurses from your group





Navy nurses, outfitted in fur-lined parkas, gloves and boots, stationed at the 1st Naval Air Station Dispensary, Attu, Alaska, November 1943. *Courtesy of Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

were parading the streets ... wearing slacks and creating a very unfavorable impression.” Physicians, all of whom were male at the time, encouraged nurses to disregard such ANC bosses, and Aynes reported that flight nurses also “were unofficially wearing slacks by June 1943,” when ANC commander Julia Flikke retired. By then, Aynes said, “Washington was inundated with problems that indicated the need for slacks.” A typical complaint came from San Francisco:

Nurses crawling in and out of trucks in short tight skirts were not only unsightly, they were undignified. But slacks had not been authorized by Washington except for boat wear ... This [exception] was the result of a picture of nurses coming down a rope ladder on the side of a transport [ship]. They were all wearing their uniform skirts and the wind was blowing!

Probably because their mere existence was controversial enough, skirts also were standard for the new non-nursing corps. Nothing drew as much media attention as what women wore, and every mass magazine ran stories on the uniforms for the first group, the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC), later the Women’s Army Corps (WAC). Commentary was to be expected from sources such as *Time* and *Reader’s Digest*, but even *The Nation*, long a thoughtful opinion journal, felt it necessary to spell out that each WAAC would be issued “three brassieres, two girdles, cotton and flannelette pajamas, a clothesbrush, wool panties, three slips, four dress shields, four pairs of cotton stockings, an apron,” etc. *Current History* felt compelled to record for posterity that WAAC slips were “a new attractive shade the color of Boston coffee.”

WAAC Director Oveta Culp Hobby recruited Dorothy Shaver, a vice president of Lord & Taylor, to design the uniform, and a new problem for Shaver was that all hemlines had to be even for a uniform appearance in marching. The

regulation was that they be sixteen inches from the ground, so skirts were adjusted for varying heights: an exceptionally tall woman would be issued a longer skirt, while short women got short skirts. Shaver’s cotton stockings were not popular, and her hat was endlessly ridiculed: *Newsweek* titled its report “Wacks War Bonnets.” As late as 1944, conservative writer Ruth Peters used the hat—which she described as a “kitchen pot turned upside down”—as a reason for not enlisting. Some WACs felt the same, and, in Pacific Theater of Operations, they used it to barter with natives who apparently had a different fashion sense.

In the corps’ early days, though, the chief concern simply was having *something* to wear. WAAC Jane Pollack, for example, shivered in summer civilian clothing as winter approached at Fort Des Moines. “Today,” she wrote late in autumn, “we were called in and presented with one pair of leather gloves apiece ... The heat is on at last, so we are not so desperate,” but WAACs still lacked other parts of their wardrobe. When bathrobes finally arrived, she wrote that they were “all size 18!” The Quartermaster Corps in charge of supply was not accustomed to female sizes, but a year later, when a *Newsweek* reporter “enlisted” incognito for a week, the system was better. She wrote:

At the clothing warehouse, we were measured for fit. In one hand, we clutched “civies.” With the other we contorted our perspiring bodies into skirts, shirts, bilious cotton stockings, and olive-drab underwear. I insisted I wore a size 10: the Army insisted I wore a size 12. In less than an hour we were tightly sealed and delivered Waacs.

The other women’s services, of course, benefited from WAAC experience. The Navy did not use “government issue” uniforms, but instead offered its WAVES a clothing allowance to purchase the various parts of her uniform. It was a subtlety without much actual reasoning, but, again, the press was impressed, and the fact that private enterprise was more directly involved somehow made the uniform more acceptable. In a story titled “Decking a WAVE,” *Business Week* reported that Chicago’s Marshall Fields sent employees to the University of Wisconsin, one of many training sites for WAVES. They turned the gym into a department store, and groups of WAVES spent as much of their \$200 allowance as they wished. It was highly managed shopping, however, as WAVES “removed civilian outer garments at a check rack and proceeded along the uniform line ... First stop ... was the blouse table. Each girl wore away one blouse [and] carried away several others ... For final alterations, clothes went to Chicago by truck and were scheduled for return ... by the end of the week.”

Even in mid-1943, when the Marines Corps became the last service to accept women, media interest in female clothing had not abated. *Newsweek* used six paragraphs to describe the uniform and helpfully pointed out that its “visored hat” was the “first women’s service headgear which takes the feminine hair-do into consideration.”

Actual Marines, however, were less enthusiastic. One told historian Mary Stremlow that after a long wait for uniforms,



These are the uniforms of the women's military corps as of autumn 1942, prior to the creation of the Coast Guard's SPARS and the Women Marines. *From left to right:* Second Lieutenant Doris Hyde of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, U.S. Army Nurse Corps; Ensign Mary E. Hill of Elizabeth City, North Carolina, U.S. Navy Nurse Corps; Lieutenant Marion R. Enright of Forest Hills, Long Island, New York, of the Navy's WAVES; Lieutenant Alberta M. Holdsworth of Boston, Massachusetts, of the WAACs (Women's Army Auxiliary Corps). *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

"that first weekend, we were also mistaken for Western Union girls." Another said that the trench coat was not warm enough, adding that "even the War Dogs had overcoats." Women Marines pointed this out in scores of petitions to headquarters, and warmer overcoats finally were ordered. They became available in February 1945, just weeks prior to warm weather and the war's end.

Shortages were the rule, not the exception, for female Marines, and they spent much time laundering (and wearing out) their few garments. Those without uniforms wore civilian clothes on duty, as only shoes, caps, and an ID badge were government issue; all other parts of the uniform came from private contractors. And when the contracted clothing finally arrived, prices were too high: the belated overcoats, for example, cost \$28, at a time when the average purchaser earned just \$20 a month. Their stockings, although much nicer than those for WACs, cost \$1.08 per pair, and many women instead obtained ration points from friends or family and lined up for bargains at public stores. The corps created a Uniform Unit for government-issue apparel early in 1944, but Streeter nonetheless wrote at the war's end that "the supply of clothing was one of the few problems to which a satisfactory solution had not been found."

Whatever their supply problems, military women were proud of their uniforms. Most wore them even on leave: it was easier to get into the local USO, for example, and many businesses offered discounts to uniformed customers. Despite

the era's emphasis on femininity, uniforms did not discourage male attention; instead, they could be a handy ice-breaker. Countless women were so proud of their uniforms that when the military modified its regulations on marriage, they chose to wear them instead of a wedding dress.

Uniforms were ubiquitous outside of the military, too, as volunteer organizations depended on them to attract members. Some, such as women in the American Relief Society, limited themselves to simple caps or armbands or aprons, but others went to excess. The American Women's Voluntary Services (AWVS) had eight official uniforms that varied by duty, and in "The Ladies!," *Time* especially mocked the "ski-troop suit for workers in the far North." This did turn out to be a genuine waste of scarce materials, but a parka seemed reasonable to AWVS women in 1940, when refugees from the Nazi invasion of Norway skied across the border to neutral Sweden. If Japan's 1942 attack on Alaskan islands had gone further, it could have proven prescient.

Most AWVS women were wealthy enough to buy these uniforms from their own pocketbook, but they were indisputably expensive. They often were, in fact, more a fashion statement than a necessity, and the *New Yorker* had a valid point when it said that "Englishwomen on duty in New York City are sometimes shocked by American women's frivolousness about wearing a uniform." It was not unusual for an organization to charge \$20 or \$30 for one, the modern equivalent of several hundred dollars. Production costs did not justify this price tag, but when Eleanor Roosevelt—a strong advocate for the practicality of uniforms—said that they should cost no more than \$3, the *New York Times Magazine* said that fashion industry representatives "all but lost the curl in their careful coiffures."

Critics had a genuine point: many people who wore uniforms during the war did not really need them, and their production contradicted the endless conservation drives in which they were worn. Men, however, were at least as wasteful as women: men in the Civil Air Patrol or Office of Civilian Defense or other such bodies probably were more insistent than women about having a full uniform. It was a symbol of status, a way to show that one was involved in the war effort, even if this particular effort was more adventure than sacrifice.

Defense industries may have exhibited the most sense on the subject. Although some companies tried to control and identify employees through uniforms, most did not. Many required female employees to wear pants or overalls, not skirts, but did not insist that they buy a particular brand or style. They frequently offered changing rooms so that women who still were timorous about appearing publicly in pants could change to a skirt before going home. Perhaps the most common fiat was one of elimination, not acquisition: women in aircraft factories, for instance, could not wear wool, because, according to author Nell Giles, "even the tiniest piece of lint can destroy the accuracy of an instrument." Almost all defense plants prohibited jewelry, a leading cause of industrial accidents. *Harper's* reported that when one factory

manager discovered “devout Catholic girls would not easily be parted from wedding rings,” co-operative local priests “promised the girls that when the war was over they would again bless the rings.”

Shoes may have drawn greatest attention. They had to be low-heeled, of course, and made of leather sturdy enough to withstand, say, a falling screwdriver or rivet. Far from resenting this requirement, Todd Shipyard women objected to their too-feminine shoes. *Harper's* quoted them: “The soles aren’t heavy enough, oxford-cut low shoes aren’t safe enough; we want them over the ankles too. And we want steel toes like the men.” The personnel department “started searching the city for men’s heavy, bulky safety shoes in the smallest sizes ... But the women were right, only it never occurred to us who were planning that they would be willing to wear ... men’s shoes. The thing we learned was that women really cared about doing the job safely.”

Safety was the number-one priority in munitions plants, and their workers were most likely to be uniformed. Women changed from civilian clothes to flame-proof suits and rubber-soled shoes everyday and were always subject to inspection. The chief worry was that someone might bring in cigarettes and matches that could cause an explosion, and one clever manager eased the inspection problem by creating latticed, see-through pockets. Not nearly all managers were so enlightened, and Augusta Clawson wrote of a shipyard accident caused by indifference to female apparel. Male welders routinely wore leather pants, she said, but for women, “it seems next to impossible to get a pair which leaves room for hips and yet is not too big around the waist.” A woman “in ill-fitting leathers” had her belt break and her pants fall down; she dropped her welding iron and was badly burned.

Consolidated Aircraft allowed the first two hundred women hired to vote on whether or not to wear uniforms, and the majority said yes. Not only did uniforms ensure safety, but also and especially it eased daily wardrobe decisions for women too busy to get to the cleaners or do laundry. Unlike male stereotypes, women did not cherish individuality in dress, nor did they want the distraction of variety in the workplace. Uniforms, too, had the advantage of not requiring ration points that affected civilian dress. On the other hand, aircraft manufacture was the best-paying of defense industries, and if factories required employees to buy their uniforms—as most did—women who were less well-paid might very well have voted against uniforms.

Finally, both defense industries and the military required women to keep their hair above their collars. If one did not want to cut her hair that short, it had to be arranged so that it was covered by a military hat or an industrial turban. Just two decades earlier, the public was scandalized by women who bobbed their hair, and even in this era, wearing pants subjected women to criticism. That changed because of the war, and wearing short hair and men’s clothing became a genuine liberation—ironically brought about by the need to conform to male standards.

*See also:* **aircraft workers; Alaska; American Women’s Voluntary Services; Army Nurse Corps; Bataan; cigarettes; Civil Air Patrol; conservation; defense industries; Dogs for Defense; dress; flight nurses; Flikke, Julia; Hobby, Oveta Culp; magazines; munitions; Marines, Women; marriage; Office of Civilian Defense; Navy Nurse Corps; physicians; Quartermaster Corps; Pacific Theater of Operations; pay; rationing; recruitment; SPARS; volunteers; unions; WAFS; WASP; WAVES; weddings; Women’s Army Corps**

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## UNIONS

Women had shown their solidarity with organized labor since 1824, when they were the majority in the nation's first strike, against the textile mills of Pawtucket, Rhode Island. Because of New Deal reforms during the 1930s that ensured the right to join unions, the labor movement could have organized millions of women into long-term supporters, but labor's male leadership largely missed this opportunity. They collected dues from female employees in unionized factories where state law allowed them to do so, but few leaders reached out to these new members. Almost none were recruited as shop stewards, let alone elected to union executive committees.

The hostility that many blue-collar men felt for women in their workplace began early in the war with the Austin-Wadsworth bill and other congressional attempts to draft women for defense jobs. The bills' sponsors were generally anti-labor, so it was understandable that unions would see a compulsory work force composed of women as an attempt to undermine the gains they had made in the previous decade. None of the bills passed, however, and the women who came to work in defense plants were there of their own free will: they wanted to defeat fascism, not to defeat unions.

Women would have welcomed labor leadership in enforcement of the Labor Department's ostensible principle of "equal pay for equal work," but the few unions that had equal-pay provisions in their contracts usually were not motivated by a sense of justice: instead, the clauses were intended to prevent the hiring of low-paid women. Unfortunately for women, Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins was more eager to please male union officials than to fight for her sisters, and Mary Anderson, head of the Women's Bureau of the Department of Labor, resigned during the war partly because of this. The principle, moreover, was solely that of the Roosevelt administration, not the law; Congress would not pass the Equal Pay Act until 1963.

Even when the Labor Department ruled in favor of equality on pay disputes, most unions helped management evade enforcement by setting up "women's jobs." Often it was difficult to see the difference between the work of a male and female welder, for instance, but job descriptions written into union contracts almost invariably defined his as skilled and hers as unskilled. Munitions plants, for example, eagerly hired women and praised them as more safety conscious than men, but a 1942 study by the government's *Monthly Labor Review* found that just three of eighteen facilities paid women equally with men for the same job. In the same year, *Business Week* candidly acknowledged that "only a third of the companies [with federal contracts] adhered to the policy of equal pay for equal work."

Male representatives of all three interests—business, government and labor—simply closed their eyes to such contractual violations, and women had no one at the negotiating table. Few even knew what Labor Department policy was supposed to be, and neither unions nor women's organizations informed them. The occasional woman who filed a grievance found such responses as that of a 1944 case in

which investigators ruled, according to the *New York Times*, "that, no matter how efficient women may be, it is right for them to be paid less for the same work if the men are doing their work in another shop." Managers were off the hook, and many even turned this into a positive by arguing that they had put an end to sexual harassment and other male hostility with gender segregation. Union leaders did not object.

Most of the era's labor officials were, in fact, social conservatives. Many came from immigrant traditions in which a woman's place was firmly in the home and from religions that defined women as inferior. The famous leader "Mother" Jones, who had died only a decade prior to the war, was not a feminist: she wanted men's wages to be high enough that their wives could focus solely on the home. The place for women was in auxiliaries to male unions, in her view, and most other labor leaders agreed. That attitude meant that there was almost no wartime effort to recruit women into unions, and those who did join were underutilized.

By mid-1944, when almost nineteen million women were in the work force, *Monthly Labor Review* found that only three million were union members. That was a big increase from 1939, when just eight hundred thousand women belonged to unions—but the numbers in unionized jobs had increased much more, and the ratio meant that less than 20 percent of female workers were union members. Moreover, almost all of the apparent gain was in "closed shops" (workplaces where union membership was required at hiring) and thus did not show any real union outreach. Worse, even in closed shops where women had to pay union dues, there still could be open discrimination against them. Reporter Elizabeth Hawes found that as late as November 1944, there were "still a few shops where union contracts ... actually provided that a man may 'bump' [displace] any woman in the plant off her job no matter how much longer that woman may have been working than he has."

The Great Depression presumption that a man had a family to support still prevailed, no matter if he was unmarried and she was a widow or had a disabled husband or other financial need. It also ignored production efficiency and assumed that any man could do the job better than any woman, despite her experience. The blind bias hurt even their own families. Many of the young women who worked in munitions plants around Baltimore, for instance, were the daughters of Appalachian coal miners. Their fathers were avid supporters of the United Mine Workers, but there is no evidence that UMW tried to organize these young women. It could have been done easily: the government would have supported unionization, and the women would have been easy to organize, yet it did not even begin to happen.

Women who worked in the Detroit-area factories that converted from cars to jeeps and tanks are another example. They had supported their men in the 1930s, when severe strikes led to the successful establishment of the United Auto Workers. UAW was powerful by the war and should have welcomed these women: many already belonged to auxiliaries established for their role as wives of union members, and they

became dues-paying UAW members in these closed shops when they took the war jobs. Instead UAW allowed management to take credit: when Ford broke its forty-year precedent and hired twelve thousand women for its Willow Run plant, for instance, it was Ford, not the UAW, that got press praise for patriotism. Labor was portrayed as merely acquiescent.

Even those unions that represented almost entirely women who worked in traditional fields, especially the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union and the Amalgamated Clothing Workers, were led by men. Women who had been brought up in socially conservative households during the Great Depression, often second-generation immigrants, were taught from youth to yield to men and to refrain from anything unconventional. They willingly voted for men in union elections, and even in these unions with a large majority of female members, very few women held top offices.

Most of the unions to which wartime women paid their dues were under the umbrella of the Congress of Industrial Organizations, which represented workers on assembly line jobs. The CIO had been seen as radical during the Great Depression, when its strikes sometimes became violent. This sort of organizing was new to the American Federation of Labor: the AFL had been formed in the 1880s for craftsmen such as carpenters and plumbers. Its members served apprenticeships to learn their skills, and most were scornful of the mass production factory workers who joined the CIO. Neither group, however, welcomed women. Even the leftist *New Republic* acknowledged that "many old line AFL unions still vigorously oppose admitting women to their organizations," and evidence that the CIO was actively recruiting them was notably lacking from the report. As union membership began declining after the war, the two merged in 1955 to create the AFL-CIO—but not until 1980 did the first woman sit on the its executive board.

Strikes were prohibited during the war, and when rationing and price controls ended with the war's end, there naturally was some inflation that led to strikes for higher pay. The most significant for women was that of telephone operators, and it presaged the future for labor and women. As the economy switched from manufacturing to service industries in the second half of the twentieth-century, pink-collar women would be more likely to organize than blue-collar men.

Teachers, health-care workers, and government employees of all sorts formed unions, while membership in the AFL-CIO slipped downwards. Dozens of women now have been elected president of the National Education Association, for example, while none has come close to the top office in the AFL-CIO. By failing to see that women were and would continue to be a vital part of the workforce, labor unions negatively affected themselves. They are only now beginning to rectify that.

*See also:* **Anderson, Mary; Austin-Wadsworth Bill; defense industries; Equal Rights Amendment; munitions; Office of Price Administration; pay; Perkins, Frances; rationing; strikes; teachers; telephone operators; underutilization**

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## UNITED NATIONS (UN)

At the 1918 end of World War I (then called "the Great War"), President Woodrow Wilson, a Democrat, led a successful drive in Europe to form the League of Nations as a way to prevent future wars—but the Republican-dominated U.S. Senate refused to ratify the treaty. The League of Nations built its headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, and carried on without the United States, but a mere two decades later, the world faced a second and more devastating war. Jane Addams and Emily Greene Balch, the first American women to win the Nobel Peace Prize, worked hard to end the first war, and they led the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF) between the wars. Many Americans saw WILPF as too radical, but by the end of the second war, the public generally agreed that something akin to the League of Nations had to be created.

The term "United Nations" began to be used just weeks after Pearl Harbor: on January 1, 1942, representatives of twenty-six countries gathered in Washington, D.C., and declared themselves the "United Nations," pledging that they would be particularly united by refusing to sign a separate peace with Hitler or his Axis associates. Some signers represented "governments in exile" and were officials from nations being governed by puppets of fascist Germany, Italy, or Japan. President Franklin Roosevelt astutely nurtured them and the idea of the United Nations, implementing 1944 conferences in

Bretton Woods, New Hampshire, and Dumbarton Oaks—an estate that Mildred Barnes Bliss created as an oasis of serenity in Washington, D.C.

The president died just days before the first meeting to write the UN Charter: despite his untimely death, the decision was made to go on with the meeting in San Francisco from April 25 to June 6, 1945. V-E Day, which ended the European war, occurred during the conference, and the effective date of the new charter (or constitution) was October 24, 1945. Less than two months after V-J Day, when the Asian war ended, it has been recognized since as United Nations Day. The UN's first official meeting was in London in January 1946; the League of Nations dissolved itself the following April; and on October 24, the General Assembly convened in New York for the first time, at an auditorium in Flushing Meadows. By the end of 1946, construction was underway on its permanent headquarters in Manhattan.

Although everyone likes the idea of peace, its details can get very messy, and the United Nations was far from uncontroversial. Even among civic-minded women of goodwill, there was a great deal of ambivalence. The League of Women Voters, for example, later fully supported the UN, but in an initial 1943 survey, just five of fourteen national officers responded positively. Even thoughtful, well-intended Americans were tired of accepting the war burdens of other nations and sincerely wanted to return to what they saw as a golden era of nineteenth-century isolationism. The idea of world governance remains a huge step in human history, and it was understandable that the public of the 1940s would need persuasion. Many women stepped up to do that, as women were involved at every stage of the UN's formation.

Already in 1943 President Roosevelt appointed Anne O'Hare McCormick, the first woman on the editorial board of the *New York Times*, to a secret committee that offered him confidential advice on the issue. Dr. Edna Fluegel, who was associated with Georgetown University, served him as a "special assistant" on the UN, as did the State Department's Dr. Emily G. Hickman. The president also saw that the State Department used the abilities of former Florida Congresswoman Ruth Bryan Owen. The daughter of Democratic presidential nominee William Jennings Bryan, she lived abroad much of her life, and Roosevelt earlier had appointed her as the nation's first female ambassador. After his death, President Harry Truman appointed her as an alternate delegate to the UN General Assembly, and in 1948, she chaired a UN committee on scientific research. The era's documents often refer to her as "Mrs. Rohde," the name of her third husband.

Virginia Gildersleeve never married, and Roosevelt appointed this fellow New Yorker to the first formative conference in San Francisco. She was the only woman in the eight-member official delegation, but countless others acted as "Consultants" or "Associate Consultants," a term that soon would become "NGOs," or non-governmental organizations affiliated with the UN. Florida's Mary McLeod Bethune joined two men from the NAACP (National Association for

the Advancement of Colored People), and she was recognized by the media as the world's only representative for women of color. Their pressing issue was an end to colonization, as European nations still "owned" much of Africa and Asia. Debate on this would be one of many difficult subjects that the nascent UN would have to tackle, but women from those continents had no voice. Bethune did her best to speak for them.

A few similarly isolated women also worked for the success of the new idea, including Dr. Wu-Yi-fang; like Virginia Gildersleeve, she was the only woman in China's "large delegation." The *San Francisco Examiner* said that others on the train with her—which did include many wives of Chinese men—referred to her as "the outstanding woman educator in China." The paper added that they spoke of Dr. Wu in "words of unstinted admiration." These Chinese people, of course, represented Nationalist China—and that would continue to be the official case within in the UN long after Nationalists lost their civil war with Communists. The vast population of mainland China would have no voice, while a minority who fled to coastal islands pretended to represent them. That sort of devil-in-the-details would plague the San Francisco meeting and future ones.

Few Chinese-American or other Asian-American women got involved in the nascent UN, and by far largest minority group that worked for it was Jewish-Americans. The National Council of Jewish Women sent representatives to the San Francisco conference, and Eleanor Roosevelt called Vicky Levine "a one-woman battle" against the hostility that isolationists showed towards the United Nations. Ironically, after the shock of Hitler's genocide wore off, the postwar era would witness an unfortunate rise in anti-Semitism. Many Americans openly blamed the victim for the war, and some opposed the UN as a "Jewish conspiracy."

UN opponents often also had opposed the war—and some were motivated by their longtime hatred of the Roosevelts. Among the far right groups who sent representatives to argue against final ratification of the UN Charter were Catholic Mothers and Daughters of America, Mothers of Sons Forum of Cincinnati, United Mothers of Cleveland, Women's League for Political Education, and—clearly influenced by the anti-Roosevelt *Chicago Tribune*—the Chicago and Cook County Federation of Women's Organizations. We the Mothers Mobilize for America sent a written statement of opposition. The most significant of the groups that opposed the UN was the Blue Star Mothers of America, a body composed of women whose children served in the World War II military. Except for it, the others were small and short lived.

Right-wing women disapproved of the fundamental concept of the UN, but left-wing women were disappointed in its details. The WILPF, for example, complained that the planned UN would be "far less democratic and frankly more militaristic" than the League of Nations. The late 1944 statement continued its criticism of the Dumbarton Oaks draft, observing that it was not a "true international arrangement," but one that would allow the winners of World War II to dominate.



They were particularly dismayed by the lack of provisions for disarmament, and historian Carrie Foster quoted WILPF leader Dorothy Detzer as saying that was “about as reasonable as [consulting] pacifists on the strategy of battle.”

Much larger mainstream women’s organizations, however, soon were fully engaged in UN support. The American Association of University Women sent information on the Dumbarton Oaks conference to each of its twelve hundred chapters, and League of Women Voters president Anne Hartwell Johnstone performed outstanding work in San Francisco. Margaret Hickey of Business & Professional Women (BPW) did the same, and when it was time for ratification of the UN Charter, she devoted three issues of BPW’s *Independent Woman* to the subject. This campaign for Senate ratification often was called “Second Chance” to remind senators and the public of the failure to ratify after World War I, and another supportive organization was Women in Broadcasting. They pledged to run a three-month educational effort on radio, aimed especially at positively influencing women.

The war still was ongoing at the time of the San Francisco conference, and the American Women’s Voluntary Service (AWVS) supported the UN by caring for conference participants. They ran a convenient cafeteria, provided city maps, found hotel rooms, and otherwise welcomed visitors who spent long and tedious weeks hammering out UN structure. AWVS members often were Republicans, as were many of the millions of women affiliated with the General Federation of Woman’s Clubs, but the GFWC nonetheless issued a written statement supporting the UN Charter. Junior Leagues of America was similarly conservative, but its representative, Mrs. Ralph J. Jones, affixed her name and organization to a call for ratification. Church Women United, the YWCA (Young Women’s Christian Association), and the Hebrew Young Women’s Christian Association also added their approval.

Smaller groups of supportive women included the National Association of Women Lawyers, the National Council of Women of the United States, and the Women’s Action Committee for Victory and a Lasting Peace. Even the Girls Friendly Society of the USA sent a speaker to Washington to testify for ratification, as did the PTA. Finally, others who merit mention were Jane Evans of the National Peace Conference, Marie Ragonetti of the Commission to Study the Organization of Peace, and Dorothy B. Robins, who represented the League of Nations Association and served as secretary for the ratification planning committee. She later wrote a book on the subject, *Experiment in Democracy* (1971).

There is no doubt that the vast majority of American women looked forward with optimism to this fundamental change in the way the world is run, and elected women of both parties joined in making the UN a success. Members of Congress did double duty as UN delegates in its early days; California Congresswomen Helen Gahagan Douglas and Illinois’ Emily Taft Douglas began their tenure in this position in 1946. Their surnames were those of their husbands’

and the two were not kin, but both were progressive Democrats with longtime interest in international relations. After Republicans won the 1952 election, Ohio Congresswoman Frances Bolton held this position and earned respect for her expertise on Africa.

Rita Kleeman represented the Writers’ War Board on the planning committee for UN ratification, and many female journalists covered the UN’s formation. One of the most notable was Kathryn McLaughlin, a war correspondent for the *Chicago Tribune* who later joined the *New York Times*. She not only wrote about the UN’s founding, but also covered the Nuremberg trials of war criminals, the first time in world history that civilian victims of war could face those who had tortured them—and equally important, the first time that victorious nations offered their former enemies a fair trial. Gretta Palmer, a longtime journalist who was on the board of governors for the Overseas Press Club, thoughtfully covered the issue of independence for Asian and African colonies. She foretold the recent history of Vietnam when she wrote in 1947 that Saigon was “the only place I have ever been ... where war correspondents were issued *tommy-guns*,” as machine guns then were called.

By publishing such details of peace efforts, female editors and media owners exerted even more influence. Freda Kirchwey firmly proclaimed that her elite journal, *The Nation*, would be a strong UN supporter as long as she owned the majority of its stock. The same was true of Dorothy Schiff, publisher of the *New York Post*, who proudly called herself “a crusading liberal,” as well as Cissy Patterson, owner of the *Washington Herald*, then the capital’s most widely-read newspaper, and Helen Rogers Reid, publisher of the *New York Herald-Tribune*. Finally, even though she was employed by the seemingly traditional *Ladies Home Journal*, no journalist was a better advocate for internationalism than its Dorothy Thompson.

Perhaps the most important act on behalf of the UN, however, was President Truman’s insistence that the first lady of the world, Eleanor Roosevelt, use her tremendous knowledge and global contacts. He was unwilling to let her constrict herself to the war widow role that she initially wanted, and New Year’s Eve of 1945 found her packing for London and the first UN General Assembly. She was the only woman in the U.S. delegation, and the State Department’s old guard initially doubted her abilities as a diplomat. In the end, however, even her worst critics retracted. Republican Senator Arthur Vandenberg, a Michigan isolationist who headed the delegation, was “alarmed” when he heard that Truman was considering this appointment, but a year later “was enlivening Washington dinner tables with his paeans of praise for Mrs. Roosevelt.” According to historian Joseph P. Lash, Vandenberg said, “I take back everything I ever said about her, and believe me, that’s plenty.”

From January of 1946 through December of 1948, Eleanor Roosevelt chaired interminable meetings of the UN’s Human Rights Commission in Geneva, Paris, and New York. They were complex and controversial, with strong feelings on

both sides of hard arguments. The most important immediate problems were millions of refugees, some of whom were being repatriated to their former homes against their will, and independence for colonies ranging from the Belgian Congo to French Algeria to the Dutch East Indies. Although Roosevelt was close to many Britons, she considered fairly the claims of their colonists from Burma to Rhodesia. Sometimes using her fluent French, she also faced down Soviets and others who regularly insulted her country, but not her.

When she came to understand that “all men are created equal” would be taken literally in many languages, she assisted the women’s caucus in drafting gender-neutral words. Always a superlative networker, she reached out for advice to many women whose names now are scarcely known. Vera Whitehouse, for example, brought Roosevelt’s attention to such details as a mechanism for control of atomic energy and an effective world court. Although Americans still have not accepted those goals, Roosevelt credited Whitehouse as the most effective behind-the-scenes worker for the successful creation of the UN’s Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Ultimately, though, it was Eleanor Roosevelt was chiefly responsible for the amazingly progressive Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Adopted on December 10, 1948, it remains the planet’s most important ideal.

**See also:** **American Women’s Voluntary Service; Balch, Emily Greene; Bethune, Mary McLeod; Blue Star Mothers; Bolton, Frances; Business and Professional Women; correspondents, war; Douglas, Helen Gahagan; Gildersleeve, Virginia; Kirchwey, Freda; Jewish-American women; League of Women Voters; occupied Germany; opposition to the war; Owen, Ruth Bryan; postwar; refugees; Roosevelt, Eleanor; Thompson, Dorothy; V-J Day; Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom**

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## USO (UNITED SERVICES ORGANIZATIONS)

Hundreds of thousands of women volunteered at USO clubs during the war years, entertaining millions of off-duty soldiers. The organizational coalition, which was almost always referred to by its initials, began at the suggestion of President Franklin Roosevelt early in 1941. Its purpose was to unite hospitality efforts for soldiers; the six initial partners were the National Catholic Community Services, National Jewish Welfare Board, Salvation Army, Travelers Aid, YMCA, and YWCA. The Red Cross, notably, did not join, but continued to do hospitality work, especially its “canteens” and “club mobiles,” along with its more serious emergency medical and refugee services.

The USO’s umbrella soon provided a network for countless local efforts, and by 1944, it had some 3,000 facilities in every part of the nation as well as overseas. Using the slogan “a home away from home,” USO clubs always offered free coffee and donuts. It was supported by public donations and had a \$32 million budget by 1942. This went largely to pay rent and maintenance, as well as travel expenses and salaries for some full-time workers, most likely men. Older women volunteered behind its food counters, usually serving homemade and donated refreshments, while younger women volunteered on the dance floor.

Military posts are a boon to local economies, but they traditionally also are a social negative, as bored and lonely soldiers seek something to do with their leisure. Although they rarely said so openly, civic-minded local residents who ran USOs wanted to avoid becoming “army towns,” with their well-known problems of prostitution, gambling, crime, violence—and resultant property-value decline. Only a minority of young men could be expected to seek out a local church or youth group, and it was incumbent on the permanent residents of such boomtowns to provide entertainment outside of red-light districts. They also sought to allay the fears that locals often had about newcomers. Most military facilities were in the South, and in this less-traveled time, it was not uncommon to find prejudice not only against black soldiers, but also against Catholics, Jews, and Yankees in general. The task of USO leaders was to move residents beyond that, to get them to accept transient soldiers as meriting their personal welcome. Writer Keith Ayling presented the typical situation:

Ministers [spoke to] parents of the danger to the morals of their daughters by the presence of the troops, and in so many words warned them to keep their girls at home. If it occurred to any of those good townspeople not only that these very soldiers were civilians in uniform, but that their own sons were probably having the same experience in other towns, none of them dared to say so.



WAVES pose outside the Hui Welina USO Servicewomen's Club, Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, 1945. *Courtesy of Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

The USO aimed to change such attitudes by linking suspicious permanent residents with military “boys” who could be their sons or brothers. Its clubs successfully developed a reputation for clean, wholesome fun—a place where a guy could go to get a soft drink, play checkers, listen to music, and especially, dance. Indeed, dancing was the chief activity associated with USOs: young men went there to meet young women, and dancing was the socially acceptable way to get physically close to the opposite sex. It was a narrow line to walk, and some clubs did it more successfully than others.

In sophisticated areas it was not difficult to recruit female dance partners: reporters such as J.C. Furnas said that other New York City charities resented the fact that “agencies seeking girls to dance with servicemen” had thousands of names on file. In smaller towns, however, the usual USO party attracted many more men than women. Although chaperones and supervision were routine, recruitment of young women to clubs inherently bore some resemblance to procurement of girls for less honorable activity. Busloads of gals met busloads of guys, and such staged social events with strangers inherently encouraged objectification. Men became even more likely to think of women as interchangeable—but there may have been even more emotional harm in the opposite direction. Not infrequently, a young man would go off to combat thinking that a dance partner might become a life partner, and the longer he was gone, the more romantic his special night at the USO became. She meanwhile moved on to dozens of other men, and hearts predictably broke.

No programs trained young women on how to handle these situations, but even teenagers soon became aware of the danger for the soldier, if not for themselves, if she allowed too much personal contact. It frequently changed a young woman's perception about USO volunteering, too, as she had to retrain herself to think in terms of temporary

flirtations, not lasting relationships, and encourage the young man to adopt the same here-today, gone-tomorrow attitude. Most dance volunteers also discovered that these men usually were not what older people predicted: soldiers who came to USO clubs usually were sweetly innocent, not the lechers that worried moralists. One woman, for example, told sociologist Henry Bowman that she expected dances to be “wrestling matches” and was surprised that “the most illicit proposals” she received were to go “outside for a beer.” She also demonstrated great empathy for the emotional price of such artificial encounters when she added, “I don't know how many boys have said to me in the middle of a dance, ‘I'll bet every one of us looks just the same to you.’”

There would be no dance partners at all when the USO followed soldiers overseas. Perhaps as many as three thousand women went abroad as USO entertainers, but soldiers only saw these singers and dancers from afar: the women were closely chaperoned and rarely had a chance to develop relationships with men. Moving from camp to camp with a show in a different place almost every night, they worked hard—but it also was a terrific way to promote one's career at the USO's expense. Hollywood agencies always had a waiting list of both male and female entertainers eager to join a USO tour. Some of the era's “all-girl” bands also starred in USO shows. Entertainments gave more than four hundred thousand performances all over the globe to audiences large and small, and countless female entertainers got their big break via the USO. Carole Landis wrote a memoir, *Four Jills in a Jeep*, about touring with three other entertainers who wanted to raise their star status. It later became a movie, and she toured in England, North Africa, and the South Pacific.

Back home, still other women used USO facilities in the role of “camp follower”—a woman who followed a husband to his training camps before he went overseas. They used USO ironing boards and sewing machines during the day, but at night the scene changed: one of them, Barbara Klaw, said that men then “jammed the rooms” of the “magnificent” USO Club near Fort Crowder, Missouri. Despite such ostensible outreach to strangers, however, she also said that the man in charge of the USO considered young wives to be a “bother” and that most townspeople were hostile to her and her friends.

Servicewomen also often felt out of place at USOs, which were so clearly intended for servicemen and civilian women. Just four facilities specifically targeted the approximately four hundred thousand women in the military—and one of those was late in the war and in Hawaii. San Francisco, New York, and Washington, D.C., were the other sites, and Nona Johnson, who served at the Washington headquarters of the Marine Corps, wrote of the one there at 1911 H Street NW. “It was noted for its homelike atmosphere,” she recalled. “Built in an old church just off Pennsylvania Avenue, it was available until 2300 hours each day. A plate lunch cost 25 cents.” When she got a weekend pass to New York, she stayed at “the Women's Military Service Club, Madison Avenue at 50th St... One could get a bunk for \$1 a night with a free





This USO Club is typical in having many more sailors and soldiers than available dance partners. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

breakfast.” Like most military women, Johnson used the USO less for entertainment than for a safe and affordable retreat from barrack life.

The lunch that Johnson mentioned was not common: most USOs assumed that their clientele ate meals at their military mess and usually provided only snacks. It rarely occurred to anyone that daytime users, the servicemen’s wives, also could have benefited from an affordable lunch. Another group that went ignored by the USO other charities was the often-lonely young women who worked in boom town defense plants. Many had been recruited for rural munitions plants, for example, where there were no theaters or restaurants or other opportunities for leisure—and again, many local residents responded with hostility when these young women crowded the few businesses that were available. Even at urban sites, such as Los Angeles’ aircraft plants and Baltimore’s shipyards, the USO did not reach out to these young women nor protect their morals in the way that was routine for military men.

Although the USO could have done more for women, it did offer fairly generous services to African Americans. As with whites, the USO aimed at black servicemen and largely ignored servicewomen, but nearly three hundred USO clubs, or about 10 percent, served African Americans. A few were integrated, often because white soldiers wanted to hear the superior musicians who performed at black clubs. African-American women volunteered in kitchens and on dance floors, and some met trains and buses that brought new recruits: in this era of segregation, they pointed to the parts of town where black soldiers would feel most welcomed. Sociologists also reported that African-American women were glad to be asked to volunteer for the USO and considered this new recreational opportunity to be a positive change. Although African-American women always had volunteered in their communities, most whites never thought about that; they considered the USO’s recruitment of them to be so novel

that *Survey Graphic*, an academic journal for social workers, titled its report “Here’s a New Thing Altogether.”

It was one of many aspects of the war that united Americans and helped to bridge gaps between its citizens. By the war’s end, some 1.5 million people had given time to the USO, and the probability is that the majority were women. President Harry Truman granted the organization an “honorary discharge” in 1947, but it came to life again with the Korean War a mere five years later. USO dances never regained their World War II popularity, however, and many fewer women consider it as a volunteer opportunity. Privately operated with a quasi-military status, the USO remains committed to providing “a home away from home.”

**See also:** adolescence; African-American women; boom towns; camp followers; defense industries; courtship; Marines, Women; marriage; music; prostitution; recreation; recruitment; Red Cross; Travelers Aid; wives of servicemen; volunteers; YWCA

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# V

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## V-E DAY

The end of the war in Europe is known as V-E Day—Victory in Europe. It came when representatives of Germany signed an unconditional surrender at Allied headquarters in Berlin on May 7, 1945, and Allied leaders proclaimed the following day, May 8, as V-E Day. That was less than a month after President Franklin Roosevelt died of a cerebral hemorrhage and a week after Adolf Hitler committed suicide. Russian allies had taken Berlin on April 20, and Italian freedom fighters killed their fascist dictator, Benito Mussolini, on April 28. From then on, all the world knew that it was just a matter of days before the remaining Nazis leaders had to give in. But, because victory was in sight and yet not real, there were numerous premature announcements and celebrations.

Army nurse Eugenia Kielar celebrated on May 2, when fighting ceased in her Italian sector. “The war was over!” she wrote to her father. “There was much rejoicing in the area. Big guns were booming all day and men were screaming as they went by in trucks. Most of the girls were hitting the bottle—starting early in the afternoon.” On May 7, she added, “now everyone is worried about being sent to the Pacific.”

President Harry Truman echoed the thought. He allowed one day for celebration, and, the next day, reminded Americans by radio that “victory is but half won.” The war with Japan continued, and most people believed that it would be disastrously long with as many as a million American casualties. Allies, especially Britain and Russia, had suffered from the worldwide war much longer and more extensively than had Americans, and it would be the United States that would have to take the lead in the Pacific. That awareness had a somber effect on V-E Day: even as they poured champagne, Americans knew this celebration was very temporary.

For that one day, though, they celebrated. Millions of people spontaneously poured into city streets, embracing strangers and throwing impromptu ticker-tape parades. In sailor-filled San Francisco the party went over the top, with liquor store windows broken and bottles carried into the Market Street crowd. Even in small towns, the reaction was similar. Anne Ralph told interviewer Roy Hoopes that she had been on a train trip in Louisiana when she heard bells:

I didn’t know what was going on until the train stopped, and someone told us that the war in Europe had ended. There was rejoicing, people sort of dancing in the street and church bells ringing in every little town we went through. In New Orleans people were literally dancing in the streets. They were singing, dancing, jumping in and out of fountains, and people were kissing and hugging each other. It was like Mardi Gras, and just this incredible sense of relief that part of the war, anyway, was finished and that people would be coming home again.

Many of those bells were calling people to church, and even people who did not normally go to church attended quickly organized services of thanksgiving and remembrance. In Salisbury, Connecticut, according to Hoopes, Ann Hoskins said that “everybody dropped what they were doing and went to whatever their church was. And those who didn’t have a church went to any church. They came in overalls, they came with babies in their arms ... I’m not much of a churchgoer, but this did me in.” Martha Wood of Raleigh, North Carolina, had the same memory of going to church, but an even more poignant experience. “Our church was open for prayer,” she said, “and that day I went in with a woman who said ‘my son is in Europe.’ He was killed the next day.” Sniper fighting would continue for weeks, as unrepentant fascists sought revenge.



Other women understandably could not bring themselves to join the V-E Day rejoicing. Seattle's Mrs. Floyd Ellis, said author James Warren, "felt a bit of resentment at the jubilation." Her son had recently died in the last big battle over Germany's Rhine, and she said that her "first reaction" to V-E Day jubilation was that "glorification of this victory is sowing the seeds for the next war." More thoughtful and less motivated by personal loss than most people, her "main hope" was in the nascent United Nations, which had begun its initial meetings just days earlier in San Francisco.

On the other side of the world, Signal Corp WAC Selene Weise had a similarly serious response to V-E Day. She had moved north from New Guinea to Manila as victories were won in the Pacific Theater of Operations. She wrote her mother on May 8, 1945:

Well, thank God the war in Europe is over. It seems so funny that after three-and-a-half years of fighting in Europe there was no celebration here. I guess we are all too numb to grasp the full import. The only thing we think of now is [that] ... those men and materiel can come over here and help us fight our war over here. The feeling is pretty grim ... And we know that people sort of forget that we're over here and that some of the men have been for better than 40 months ... I just hope that everyone doesn't figure, well, it will all be over soon, and start quitting their war jobs ... After all, it will be a damn long time before any of us will put away our uniforms.

Even though she was in the European Theater, Major Charity Adams, the highest-ranking African-American woman in the Women's Army Corps (WAC), also was surprised by the actuality of V-E Day. She was busy making plans for her WAC unit to move to the French interior, and later told writer Olga Gruhzt-Hoyt:

I was enroute to Paris, from where I would go on to Rouen to prepare for the arrival of the 6888th [Central Postal Directory Battalion]. France was celebrating and Paris was one great party with Allied personnel as the guests of honor. For souvenirs, the citizens of Paris tore insignia and epaulets off [of Allied soldiers] and took gear and shoes, [but] offered wine to all. I saw five men tear a jeep apart and pass out large pieces for souvenirs. I had to take refuge in a male transit office.

Elizabeth Davey Velen also was in Paris that special day. She had joined the Office of Strategic Services a year earlier, in May of 1944, but despite being in military intelligence, had no inside information on V-E Day. She recalled for Gruhzt-Hoyt that she had dismissed as false a newspaper headline that she saw on May 7, 1945: "*La Guerre Est Finie*." At the end of the work day, she went home to an apartment that she shared with another woman, and as night came on, they noticed from their balcony:

People were emerging from homes and cafes, listening and lingering ... Suddenly, just below us a fountain that had been dormant since France fell in June 1940 burbled up into the air ... As we watched, spellbound, the Arc de Triomphe ... was flooded with light. Then to the left of us

the white dome of Sacre-Coeur in Montmartre was lit up against the night sky ...

This must be it, we thought, and we started a night-long vigil to see Paris awake to V-E Day.

In the first pale light of dawn a hurdy-gurdy started to play ... A group of people sang along with the organ-grinder; others began to dance. More and more people were filling the streets, holding hands, kissing, singing, and dancing ...

All day long we wove hand in hand with friends and strangers ... Later ... we made our way back to our office, where we perched on the wide cement windowsills overlooking the Champs, watching the singing, dancing, undulating multitude.

*See also:* **Adams, Charity; African-American women; Army Nurse Corps; British women; European Theater of Operations; French women; Pacific Theater of Operations; radio; Russian women; Signal Corps; United Nations; V-J Day; Women's Army Corps (WAC)**

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## V-J DAY

Military planners expected that V-J Day—Victory in Japan—would be about eighteen months after V-E Day, or well into 1947. Instead, it came less than five months after Europe had welcomed the war's end in May of 1945. The difference was the top secret Manhattan Project that resulted in the atomic bomb. Instead of the millions of casualties that were reasonably predicted in an invasion of the Japanese mainland, the shock of this new weapon caused Japan to capitulate. But just as Germany's Nazis waited a week after Hitler's suicide to formally surrender, Japan's fascists also delayed.

The bomb that fell on Hiroshima on August 6 killed about half of that city's population, but the only response was that Russia joined its European Allies in also declaring war on Japan. On August 9, U.S. planes dropped a second atomic bomb on Nagasaki. Thousands of tons of conventional bombs, as well as shells from battleships, already had wiped out much of Tokyo, the capital, and Japanese leaders there finally signaled their willingness to surrender—but only if

their emperor, whom they believed to be divine, retained his status. Negotiations over that took several more days. When the Allies proclaimed August 15 as V-J Day, Emperor Hirohito spoke in public for the first time ever; he went on the radio to ask his subjects to lay down their weapons. Although the devastation was so complete that many Japanese were reduced to eating acorns, some still resisted surrender, and others killed themselves in front of the emperor's palace. Japan's formal surrender, offshore on the *USS Missouri*, was not signed until September 2.

Thus, even more than with V-E Day, it was hard for Americans to determine exactly what date to celebrate—without considering the International Date Line. Public reaction also may have been more somber than V-E Day because during the period between May and August, the world had discovered Germany's racial genocide: the Japanese, with a similar belief in their superiority over other Asians, might have similar hidden horrors. Additionally, from the very beginning of the war at Bataan and Corregidor, Japan had treated its prisoners of war with exceptional cruelty, and Americans had reason to fear the worst for their captured loved ones. Then, too, many people simply were worn out by everything connected with war, and some had moved their focus to enjoying postwar prosperity. All of these factors combined to make V-J Day more tentative and somewhat less jubilant than V-E Day had been.

Reaction was understandably stronger with women who were in the Pacific Theater of Operations—when they finally accepted that the good news was true. Many were akin to Signe Skott Cooper, an army nurse who served in India in a hospital so remote that information moved slowly. “We heard the news about President Roosevelt’s death and V-E Day,” she told author Olga Gruhzt-Hoyt, but “I don’t remember the circumstances in either instance. But when V-J Day finally came, we didn’t believe it, because we had heard rumors of it for several days, and we assumed that this was just another rumor.” Gertrude Morris, a member of the Women’s Army Corps (WAC), was working as an air traffic controller on the Philippine island of Leyte. She got the news of V-J Day in an unequivocal way, but also was surprised at how quickly the war had ended. She summarized for Gruhzt-Hoyt:

In the cocoon of army life, one was far removed from the happenings of war; if we heard of the dropping of the atomic bombs ..., I don’t recall it. The news of V-J Day in August came as an unexpectedly serendipitous event. Of course, our joy was intense; I remember quite vividly the celebration, which lasted through the night and the next day. Cold champagne could not have tasted better than the warm beer we drank.

North Carolinian Ruth Coster followed Pacific victories as they happened. She had served in a Motor Pool on New Guinea, and with other WACs, was transferred to the Philippines when those islands were liberated in February. In Manila when the war ended, Coster found the most striking thing about V-J Day to be the number of people who been in hiding for years and who “came out of the woodwork”

when they knew Americans had won. Signal Corp WAC Selene Weise, writing on August 18, 1945, gave her mother more detail from Manila:

Well, it doesn’t seem possible, but it is, the war is over. Of course we had four days of celebrating before the actual confirmation by President Truman. The first night was last Friday when we heard that surrender terms had been accepted by the Japanese ... We heard the news over the radio, [but] it didn’t really soak in. And we were very much surprised to ... find the entire city of Manila gone completely wild. The troops were down from the hills and tearing down Rizal Avenue in trucks and such a racket you’ve never heard. I had the hell scared out of me when somebody threw a sizable firecracker ...

Well, of course that was premature. Then ... Sunday morning at 1:00 a.m., the kids ... at the Signal Center let out a yell ... So we all piled out of bed for the second celebration. Gee, it was exciting!

Army nurse Elsie Berger knew more than almost anyone about the latest news: she was as close to the action as a woman could be with her assignment to Tinian, the island from which the atomic bombs flew to Japan. “On V-J Day,” she said to Gruhzt-Hoyt, “the men happily drank up their ration of beer, and a few days later the chaplain ... held a solemn high mass of thanksgiving for the end of the war.”

Alene Duerk was among a handful of women who saw Tokyo before the formal surrender. Later she would be the first female admiral in the U.S. Navy, but then she was a twenty-five-year-old member of the Navy Nurse Corps. Her hospital ship, the *Benevolence*, sailed from the Marshall Islands to Tokyo, where they took aboard some fifteen hundred prisoners of war—including Britons and Australians, as well as Americans. Duerck was able to see the *USS Missouri* in the harbor, where the war-ending treaty was signed, but remembered more clearly the scene when the *Benevolence* first sailed in:

There were loud cheers when the prisoners saw our hospital ship. Many of the men jumped into the water running and swimming to reach our ship. Many were starving. The men were frantic, jubilant ... We were ... excited to be the first Americans to welcome these prisoners back home ... A number of women and children also had been held prisoner. They, too, were taken to the hospital ship.

Back on the homefront, Mary Dandouviere was at work for a newspaper in the resort town of Lake Geneva, Wisconsin, when the news of V-J Day broke. She wrote a story on the local action and recalled for author Roy Hoopes: “it was a wild celebration. Snake dance lines all over town ... Bars and places where you could dance ... were wide open that night.” Hoopes also recorded the memory of Alison Arnold in Duxbury, Massachusetts. She was driving home from work when she heard on the radio “that the thing was over. At almost every house the doors opened, and children poured out waving flags. The church bells were ringing. Everybody got in their cars and drove them around town with the horns blowing.”

More somberly, Regina Wilk of Albany, New York, discovered only on V-J Day that her husband was scheduled to return to the war: she had thought that he was home permanently, as he had kept secret the fact that he was merely on furlough. Cathleen Schurr remembered for Hoopes that she had been vacationing on Cape Cod, where her family had no radio. Someone told them the news, and everyone crowded around a car, sitting on the ground and listening to its radio. She responded to the ringing church bells, but was very distressed by the sermon of the local parson; among other things, he couldn't remember the word "atomic" until prompted by his wife.

A number of women combined their reminiscences of V-J Day with those of the death of the only president they had known in their young lives. Arkansan Marie Pinter, a cryptographer specializing in weather for the WAVES, was typical: "I was in Washington when President Roosevelt died and caught a glimpse of the caisson followed by the riderless horse going down Pennsylvania Avenue. I was there also when President Truman announced the Japanese surrender, and Washington went wild in a frenzy of celebration."

Washington indeed may have been the most festive city, as "government girls," soldiers, and sailors joined a massive downtown crowd. Nona Johnson, who served at Marine Corps headquarters, told corps historian Mary Stremlow that she and two friends ran out of their Henderson Hall barracks as soon as they heard the news:

The three of us ended up in front of the White House with everyone yelling, "Harry!" [Truman] We had to carry our caps as people were snatching them right off our heads. Fire engines were answering false alarms, cars were loaded with as many as 15 people on the fenders and riding on the roof. We walked the length of the mob and at 22:30, the beer garden still [was] busy ... It remained open until 01:00, with everything free.

**See also:** Army Nurse Corps; Bataan; children; Corregidor; cryptographers; food shortages; "government girls"; Manhattan Project; Marine Corps; motor pools; Navy Nurse Corps; occupied Japan; Pacific Theater of Operations; prisoners of war; radio; Signal Corps; V-E Day; WAVES; wives of servicemen; Women's Army Corps

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[The quotations from Marie Pinter and Ruth Coster are from archives at the University of Central Arkansas.]

## VENEREAL DISEASE (VD)

Syphilis and gonorrhea, the two most common kinds of venereal or "social" disease, plagued even the ancient world. Five thousand years ago, almost as soon as written records evolved, men wrote about sexually-transmitted disease. It always was a problem that worsened with war, and modern military historians assume that infection rates among male soldiers average ten times that of the civilian population—something that they routinely blame on the similarly ancient practice of female prostitution.

During World War I, Congress and the military used that assumption to pass the 1918 Chamberlain-Kahn Act, which placed the burden of disease prevention on women. Those arrested for prostitution were forced to have gynecological exams—and worse, under this federal law, some military commanders and local law enforcement officials even required that women be able to document in writing the propriety of their relationship to a male escort. In other towns near military bases, a 9:00 p.m. curfew was imposed on all women.

The law expired in 1923, and, with the rise of social science during the New Deal of the 1930s, World War II's approach to the problem was much more equitable and at least somewhat more effective. Teenage sex education remained limited, but the military began recognizing that men were responsible for their own behavior and disease prevention. Beyond classes during basic training, perhaps the strongest evidence of an educational campaign was the surprising number of candid posters on the subject, most of them issued by the U.S. Public Health Service. Posters usually were placed where men, not women, would see them, but protection of innocent wives and children was a recurrent theme.

The first educational step was to make men aware of the reality and the magnitude of the problem. One poster did this by showing a calendar page being turned by a feminine hand: on top was the date with the year missing, so that it read, "194 ..." Beneath her hand was a crowd of men and the caption, "SYPHILIS — A MILLION NEW VICTIMS EACH YEAR." Another had patent medicines in the background to impart the message that "no home remedy or quack doctor ever cured syphilis or gonorrhea." A third featured a helmeted soldier and said:

FIGHT ...  
syphilis and gonorrhea  
Avoid exposure  
Avoid pickups and prostitutes  
If exposed, use prophylaxis  
If infected, see a medical officer

Experts agreed that VD was more likely among military men than among civilian men, but the opposite was true for women: civilian women were much more likely to be infected than military women. Part of the reason, of course, was be-



cause of the reality of female prostitution (in an era when a male prostitute was almost incomprehensible). Many other civilian women, though, got their disease from their husbands or lovers, who in turn may have gotten it from a prostitute. Although rumors were widespread about immorality among military women, study after study showed that to be false. Of all population groups, military women were least likely to have venereal diseases.

This was true in both America and Britain, where Parliament addressed such rumors already in 1941, before the U.S. entry into the war. According to author John Costello, “an investigating committee was set up under the chairmanship of the distinguished lawyer Miss Violet Markham.” Members of the Markham Committee toured 123 military posts, interviewed thousands of people, and reported six months later that they found “no justification for the vague, but sweeping charges” against Britain’s servicewomen. A few years later, the United States Army would have to conduct a similar investigation to halt what was termed a “slander campaign.” Army historian Mattie Treadwell said that Dr. Margaret Craighill reported late in 1944: “we have found that the medical problems as respects morals are much better controlled in the WAC (Women’s Army Corps) than in civilian” life. A postwar study by Army historians was unequivocal: “venereal disease among the Wacs was conspicuous by its almost total absence.”

But that absence did not extend to civilians or to military men. The same year that the Markham Committee investigated the possibility of VD among Britain’s military women, another study showed a soaring VD rate in the general population—a 70 percent increase since the European war had begun two years earlier. “In London and the seaports,” said Costello, the number was even “more dramatic, with Liverpool ... reporting an alarming fourfold increase in syphilis cases, and the rate ‘still rising’” in 1941. An important factor there was the large number of exiles—many of them from France, Italy, and other places where extra-marital male sexuality was routine. With most of Britain’s young men fighting abroad, lonely women found these foreigners romantic and, as a result, were exposed to disease. Rates would go still higher with the arrival of American men in 1942.

The result was that Britain began a public sex education campaign that even included radio messages—something that never would be considered in more prudish America. Women in the military did get a bit of “dignified” sex education as part of basic training, but for most civilian women, the subject of sex—let alone VD—remained taboo. Instead of education, the usual approach was to prevention still was cracking down on prostitution near military bases. Faulting such “victory girls” or “goodbye girls” for VD, the military fought the problem with “blitzes on brothels.”

Civilian officials, too, opted for compulsion over public discussion, as lawmakers who never would accept sex education in the schools found a way to address VD circuitously: in 1943, midway through the war, Alabama became the first state to require blood testing for syphilis as part of the process

for marriage licenses. Others quickly followed—but as late as 1966, there were a half-dozen states without such protection. The laws also varied widely, with some requiring blood tests for grooms, but not brides, and others exempting older people. The laws served only to caution couples, as Oklahoma was the only state that refused to grant a license if an applicant proved to have venereal disease.

When soldiers moved on from stateside training to actual fighting overseas, they could go months without even seeing a woman. The result was that when soldiers did finally have some leave, many men literally lined up at the nearest available source of sex, which almost invariably meant organized prostitution and higher health risks. The longer men were gone from home, the more likely this behavior was, as according to author Jenel Virden, a 1945 study “concluded that the majority of GIs who had been in the army for two or more years had ‘regular’ sexual relations with foreign women. On average 75 percent of all GIs engaged in sex while overseas. The major concern ... was that only 50 percent of the sexually active GIs were using prophylactics.”

Ironically, peace brought even more likelihood of infection, as bored men and war-devastated women met each other. In the European Theater of Operations, where the fighting ended first, infection rates rose rapidly after V-E Day in May of 1945. Medical officials reported that rates in “May were greater than April, and June saw the highest rate in the history of the theater.” Demobilization took months and as men waited for their ship to sail, they understandably sought out local women. Costello quoted an Army report that said “three out of four men were having intercourse with Italian women, on average once or twice a month.” The same report lamented that ships from the United States had failed to bring “seventy thousand VD posters and consignments of rubber contraceptives.”

In the Pacific Theater, the further men got away from civilization, the less likely it was that they would contract VD: Australia’s rate, for example, was higher than that in New Guinea. Two members of the Army Nurse Corps who served in India told author Barbara Brooks Tomblin:

The venereal disease rate was quite high, but ... dropped considerably in the last few months [of 1945]. When we went there it was 900 per thousand, but it dropped down ... to 104 ... The engineers and ordnance groups and “colored troops” that came out in July 1942 had such a high venereal disease rate that the hospital had to set up a tent colony of 160 beds just for those patients ... Every soldier [was] compelled to take a prophylactic ... They were not permitted to pass the gate without taking one.

Condoms at that post were handed out at a general rate of four per man per month—which medical officers considered inadequate. Most of the public remained unaware of this practice throughout the war, but already in 1942, sociologist Ernest Burgess wrote on the military’s policy of “compulsory use of prophylaxis.”

“If you can’t say no, take a pro,” became a common slogan, and author Allan Brandt added:

The Army established hundreds of stations in all theatres for chemical [calomel] treatment after intercourse, as well as providing condoms *en masse*. For ten cents soldiers could obtain kits containing three condoms and a small tube of lubricating jelly; some units distributed these packets without charge. When women replaced men behind the sales counters at the Ships Service stores and Post Exchanges, sales of condoms reportedly fell. To overcome this problem, vending machines were installed ... As many as 50 million condoms were sold or distributed each month of the war.

Clearly the military not only condoned condoms for what was known to be extra-martial sex, but even compelled their use. This was an entirely new cultural attitude for many soldiers, especially young men from unsophisticated and rural families without access to condoms. Contraception of any sort was not easily obtainable in that era, and some heavily Catholic states banned the sale of any device to prevent either pregnancy or venereal disease. The military and most clergymen were complete opposites on this: his superior officers told the soldier that he must use condoms, while especially the Catholic church told him that he must not use them, even within marriage.

The contradiction doubtless caused many men to think seriously about contraception for the first time in their lives. Military compulsive use thus acquainted men with a new practice and accustomed them to condoms, which they otherwise might never have considered. Moreover, the sex education that the military taught had further effect when men returned home. VD was no joke to military physicians—who sometimes taught the subject with horrifically graphic movies—and so when the seasoned soldier came home, the dirty-joke approach to sex no longer seemed as funny.

The scientific language he learned also gave a soldier the vocabulary for talking with his wife or sweetheart. That still was necessary for most couples, as until the cultural revolution of the 1960s, an intimate conversation with an informed man would be women's best source of information on condoms, contraception, and VD. Women's magazines rarely addressed these topics, and libraries often refused to shelve the few non-medical books that dealt with VD. Doubtless many women in earlier eras died from venereal disease without ever knowing the cause of their ailments: neither doctors nor husbands told them.

Although VD rates dropped in the late 1940s, it was on the rise again by 1957, probably as a result of increased urbanization and more sexual experience on the part of women. The war definitely made it less taboo to discuss sexual matters, but it was scientific progress more than social change that made venereal disease less deadly than it had been. Postwar plastic offered better-fitting condoms than prewar rubber, and especially sulfa drugs and then penicillin made this plague less serious—until the rise of new kinds of sexually-transmitted disease in the next generation.

*See also:* **advertising (posters); Army Nurse Corps; birth control/birth rate; British women; Craighill, Margaret;**

**divorce; European Theater of Operations; marriage; movies; Pacific Theater of Operations; pregnancy; prostitution; radio; slander campaign; V-E Day; wives of servicemen; Women's Army Corps**

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## VETERANS

When the war ended, most people assumed that women would disappear from the military until the next national emergency. Like most men in wartime, they were not part of the "regular army"—but because women served in all-female units that probably would be disbanded, the status of female veterans was much more vague than that of men.

Women had been limited to gender-based corps (Women's Army Corps, the Navy's WAVES, Women Marines, and the Coast Guard's SPARS), while men served in corps organized by purpose (such as Infantry or Artillery or Signal Corps), none of which would end with the war's end. To be sure, there was one seldom-noted exception to this general rule: no one doubted that the well-established Army Nurse Corps and Navy Nurse Corps would remain and that they would be all-female. Other women's units, however, probably would be dissolved or would continue only on paper, with a skeletal staff at the War Department to carry out any re-mobilization.

For three years, until the passage of the Women's Armed Services Integration Act in 1948, the status of non-nursing women remained in limbo. Veterans of the Women's Army Corps read in the papers that their beloved first boot camp, Fort Des Moines, no longer would house women, and women who served in the naval branches also their units phasing out. Yet some women in all service branches hoped that they might re-enlist. In this uncertain time, reserve units of women who had been mustered out were organized in a few cities, but that option was not available to most female veterans. Even then, women were volunteers, not paid reservists, and they donated their work (usually typing for male reserve units). Whether or not their corps continued, female veterans would not have the option of joining the reserves and being paid to maintain their skills in the way that men did.

Paying reservists for weekend training was just one of the ways that the nation showed its gratitude to those who won the war. Congress showered veterans with benefits in the GI Bill of Rights—but because women's status was ambivalent, both they and most of the public were unsure if such benefits extended to servicewoman. In the complexities of the war-time military, for example, some women—especially in the air services of the WAFS and WASP—got no benefits at all, either during their time on duty or afterwards. In fact, most women were entitled to GI Bill benefits, but they seldom were briefed on this in the systematic way that men were. Many were unaware for decades after the war ended that they could have taken advantage of GI Bill rights. While millions of civilian women—the wives of servicemen—benefited indirectly from the GI Bill and other veterans' programs, the majority of women who actually served did not apply for their share of the federal government's generosity.

Thus, much more than men, female veterans went home to little fanfare and much uncertainty. The Veterans Administration (VA) almost totally overlooked them: for decades, the VA did not even know how many female veterans there were, until the 1980 census finally added that question. Male veterans encouraged that nonrecognition, as women were excluded from the Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) and similar organizations. Women who wanted the company of their former colleagues instead were relegated to female auxiliaries, where they had little in common with wives of servicemen. As late as the Carter administration in the 1970s, VA officials who raised the issue at a VFW convention were shouted down.

But few female veterans wanted to hang out at the local VFW hall in any case. They had their individual plans: some were married when they enlisted and happily rejoined husbands; others had met someone during the war and looked forward to a wedding and children. The home that they built, however, rarely was financed by the GI Bill that backed millions of mortgages for male veterans, nor did women begin their own businesses with VA funding. Accustomed to an inferior status throughout the war, most assumed that "veterans" were axiomatically male.

Probably because educational requirements for female

enlistees were higher than those for men, the benefit that women were most likely to use was educational aid. A few colleges—most notably New Jersey College for Women—actively recruited female veterans, but truly elite women's colleges seemed to actively avoid them. Even though Mildred McAfee, who headed the Navy's WAVES, was associated with these schools, she did not use her academic credentials to encourage female veterans at places like Vassar or Smith. The unspoken message was that the parents who paid high tuition for their daughters did not want them exposed to women with real-life experience.

*Time* opined in January of 1945 that female veterans were apt to "feel more at ease on larger co-ed campuses"—but there a woman had to compete for space with millions of men whose education was delayed by the war. The GI Bill caused tremendous academic transformation, as colleges took advantage of the tuition money the federal government supplied, but female students suffered from this soaring enrollment. Some state colleges actually banned the admittance of women in the immediate postwar years, while others turned formerly gender-segregated schools into co-ed institutions. This did not have the equalizing effect that it may appear: when Florida College for Women became Florida State University, for example, the priorities became football and fraternities. Just as at the formerly all-male University of Florida, men at FSU soon took over campus leadership positions previously held by women.

The cost of living also was a shock to many female veterans. While men bought homes with the GI Bill, some women found that they could not afford even rent. A former Navy WAVE, for instance, said she had looked forward to privacy after years of living in barracks, but realized that rent was much too high to live alone. She told the *New York Times*' Nancy McInerney that she had been moving between friends' homes and hoped to have "one-third of a room in a girls' club" the next month. Other costs, too, surprised women who had grown accustomed to a military that provided their housing, food, uniforms, and medical care. A Coast Guard SPAR, for example, cancelled her planned vacation because she had to spend all of her exit pay on clothing for her job search.

Like male veterans, female veterans had a theoretical right to their prewar jobs: simultaneous with V-J Day, the Labor Department announced that "servicewomen honorably discharged from the military forces are entitled to reemployment in their previous positions if they are able to meet the requirements." The "if" left a giant loophole—but more than that, most women did not want their old jobs. They wanted better jobs based on their broadened experience, but few employers recognized that asset. Veterans of World War I, whose experience was limited to non-transferable skills in marching and shooting, did not understand that women in the second war had developed a wider knowledge base, including new technologies skills that were relevant to many kinds of businesses.

Even if they stayed within a traditionally feminine field, female veterans nonetheless had trouble conveying the va-



lidity of their military experience. A woman who handled a monthly payroll of \$50 million, for example, said that a potential employer dismissed this as somehow insufficient to be his bookkeeper. McNerny reported that at a New York meeting for female veterans, two-thirds of the 150 attendees averred that employers discriminated against them, and "most had found themselves barred from professional fields in which they had some training."

Nor were employers the only dismissive ones. The low-key reaction of family and friends to female veterans probably was the most painful, as even her loved ones rarely equated a woman's service with that of a man. The media encouraged this habit, including media targeted at women: it was almost impossible to read a women's magazine during the war's last year that did not run an article on the care and feeding of male veterans, but very few mentioned female veterans. Wives and mothers were repeatedly told that they should overlook the negative behavior of their male veteran, that they must be patient and accommodating while soldiers readjusted to being civilians. Shell-shocked men indeed did merit devotion—but too many families and friends forgot that female veterans also had bad experiences and similar emotional needs. Instead, as McNerny said, the female ex-soldier "is supposed to take up with the dishes and dusting right where she left off." She quoted one:

The home folks are usually overanxious to make allowance for returned male veterans, but there is more than a slight tendency to make light of the effects of military life on women... I found on coming home that my friends and relatives regard the entire episode as just that—an episode, over now and best forgotten.

While men joined veterans organizations and marched proudly in parades, women were expected to quietly pack up their emotions and even their relevant career achievement and put these years of their lives away forever. Even the era's leading feminist organization, Business & Professional Women (BPW), seemed incapable of envisioning a future that would allow women to use their military experience in the civilian economy. To its credit, BPW held a national conference on female veterans, but the experts who led it seemed to assume the postwar era would replicate prewar conditions; they offered no glimmer of understanding that this was an unprecedented chance for change. The July 1945 issue of BPW's publication, *Independent Woman*, summarized the conference:

All of the speakers stressed the fact that since by far the greater number of servicewomen are doing much the same type of work which they did before entering the service, therefore most of them will be wanting to go back to their old fields, but at better jobs. Relatively few will seek opportunities in the newer and less familiar types of work in which a minority of specially trained women have been engaged. It was also pointed out that since most of the servicewomen simply continued with familiar types of work, but under the unfamiliar condition of military exigencies and discipline, the training and experience which they have received has served chiefly to polish up their already existing ... skills.

The conclusion was almost insulting, a huge misstatement of what women actually had done in the military. Although many were traditional typists and telephone operators, many others worked in weather forecasting and air-traffic control and photography; they flew planes and drove trucks; still others loved being mechanics and electricians and carpenters and even plumbers. They had capably fulfilled some four hundred Military Occupational Specialities (MOS), but those who wanted to use these skills in civilian life found no welcome—even from women who were deemed leaders.

It was a giant waste of the nation's investment in their education and a perfect case for the Equal Rights Amendment, but the era's female leadership was not up to the task. Congresswomen who had championed the legislation that allowed women into the military in 1942 were much less likely to look out for them as veterans in 1945—even though some were in positions of real power. The Labor Department was headed by a woman, Frances Perkins; Mary T. Norton chaired the House Labor Committee; and soon after the war's end, Edith Nourse Rogers chaired its Veterans Committee. They were distracted by many other issues, though, including the new United Nations, and the hundreds of thousands of female veterans simply got lost among the millions of men.

The best advocates for female veterans, indeed, were not other women, but were men who had worked with them. Writer Eleanor Lake pointed to the example of a former Navy officer who was setting up an oil business and planned to staff his entire office with former WAVES. "They are highly educated," he said, "and they have character. Anyone who went through what they did can take it."

He was the exception, though, not the rule. Most people had little or no appreciation of what servicewomen had done and dismissed that experience as unimportant. *Reader's Digest* was right when it mused that "GI Jane, the belle of the military world, is often a wallflower in civilian life." A WAC who worked as a retail clerk before the war provided a perfect example:

The Army gave her aptitude tests, sent her to ... school, then shipped her to the Pacific ... Betsy learned to organize her work in improvised offices in the steaming jungles of New Guinea ... When her colonel put her in charge of setting up the paperwork for a special intelligence officer, she did it well ...

Back home, she pinned her discharge emblem proudly on her purse and went to look for a job. She found that the Army's notes on her record meant nothing to civilian employers. She was offered jobs as a waitress, messenger file-clerk and, full circle, a ten-cent store girl.

They had expected better—and had been encouraged to believe that by military leaders and especially by recruiters who wanted women during the war. Mary-Agnes Brown, who headed the WAC in the Pacific Theater of Operations, doubtless believed she was speaking the truth when she predicted to author Alma Lutz at the war's end:

Working with women under women officers, respecting those officers and ... the good work which women are able to

perform will make them acknowledge as a matter of course that women have the ability to hold public office ...

They will ... expect to be treated as partners in business and industry, with equal pay for equal work, and will expect equal rights under the law.

But this sort of equality, in fact, would take decades. Instead of organized political action for legal change, most female veterans focused on individual achievement and especially on how they personally had changed because of their military service. Of some fifteen hundred WACs who filled out an exit questionnaire, not one said that she was the same person who had enlisted. All had learned self-assurance, responsibility, time management, and tact. In an April 1945 story for the *New York Times Magazine*, one WAC said that "the Army has taught me things about myself I never knew before." Recruiters had asked her to talk on the radio about her experience in North Africa, and she had tried hard to avoid doing so. Extremely nervous when she began, she soon discovered that she liked being on radio and was determined to make it her postwar career.

Increased self-confidence, however, was not at the top of the list of the ways in which these veterans said they had changed. Two-thirds listed their greatest gain as an increased tolerance for differences, especially racial and religious differences. "In the Army," said a WAC who won a coveted Bronze Star, "we lose eccentricities, prejudices, and pettiness ... We lose intolerance built on ignorance, and believe me, there is not one of us who is not a better woman for it."

*See also:* **Army Nurse Corps; benefits; Business & Professional Women's Club; Brown, Mary-Agnes; colleges; decorations; demobilization; Des Moines, Fort; Equal Rights Amendment; GI Bill; housing; Lutz, Alma; magazines; McAfee, Mildred; Marines, Women; Military Occupational Speciality; Navy Nurse Corps; North Africa; Norton, Mary T.; Pacific Theater of Operations; Perkins, Frances; postwar; radio; Rogers, Edith Nourse; Signal Corps; SPARS; V-J Day; wives of servicemen; Women's Armed Services Integration Act; WAFS (Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron); waitresses; WASP (Women's Airforce Service Pilots); WAVES; Women's Army Corps (WAC)**

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## VICTORY GARDENS

Even before the United States entered World War II, much of the world was starving. War in the Pacific, in North Africa, and in Europe had gone on for years, destroying crops and forcing farmers to become soldiers. The magnitude of feeding America's Allies (and later, former enemies) would test the abilities of the nation's farmers. They needed all the help they could get from gardeners.

The Agricultural Department organized the Women's Land Army to assist with major farm operations, but it also ran a strong advertising campaign to convince Americans that they could and should grow food. Its original emphasis was on farm women, as officials feared that unskilled urban gardeners would waste seeds, fertilizer, and other scarce resources. People who routinely gardened, as did most farm and small-town women, were told to grow more vegetables to eat in summer and preserve for winter: the 1942 goal was 5.8 million gardens, a 30 percent annual increase.

"Canning" was the term for such preservation, even though women used glass jars, not cans, both for better preservation and because of wartime metal shortages. Home freezers were not yet an option, although a few women in rural communities rented space in the local butcher's meat locker for garden produce that they froze. Women in climates with low humidity sometimes dried food, especially from fruit trees, but most of the garden harvest would be packed in sterilized jars, placed in a steam-pressure canner, and stored in cellars for winter.

Men helped with gardening, especially the initial plowing and tilling, but women did much of the planting, weeding, and picking—and virtually all of the canning. It was a process that required appreciable skill: pressurized canners



Couple planting an urban garden. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

could explode, and if jars were not properly skilled, bacteria could become a silent killer. The Agriculture Department had created some communal canneries in rural areas during the New Deal of the 1930s, and during the war, the department's home economists stayed busy teaching preservation processes to newcomers. The department also did a good job of planning with manufacturers, so that canners, as well jars and their rubberized metal tops, remained available despite wartime shortages.

Those shortages meant rationing of commercial canned goods, something that gave even longtime gardeners the incentive to grow and preserve more food. Rationing certainly was a factor with urban gardeners and with people who were affluent enough that they had not gardened in the past. Home economist Mary Cunningham Baer, for instance, reported that "the ten or twelve families" who had not grown a garden in her farm community were doing so in 1942, the war's first year. Some were thoughtful enough to grow more "keeper" crops that did not need special preservation, particularly winter squashes, potatoes, onions, carrots, and turnips. Others initiated telephone networks to inform each other of food surpluses and deficits, as well as to share scarce metal tools.

When Gallup did a poll at the end of the 1942 growing season, a solid 75 percent of Americans said that their families had canned home-grown produce. They grew big gardens, too, as Gallup also reported that the average rural plot was a half-acre; in small towns, they were about 3,800 square feet, while urban gardens managed 500 square feet. By region, victory gardens were far more likely to be in the Midwest and South. Another Gallup question in spring of 1943 showed that 21 million families intended to grow a garden—3 million more than the government's goal. By May, 7 million acres were planted, an area about ten times the size of Rhode Island. America's gardeners truly responded

to worldwide need, and *House and Garden* writer H. W. Hochbaum said that an Agriculture Department executive congratulated the public:

You did well last year—superlatively well. Green as you were (many of you), often forced to work with soil so raw and poor that it looked hopeless to experienced gardeners; despite cold spring weather, floods, droughts, bugs, and diseases, you produced nearly 8 million tons of vegetables. That was more than the total commercial production for fresh sale.

In fact, the amateurs grew only about four million tons less than did those in the business of growing fruit and vegetables. The next year should be even better, Hochman predicted, as new gardeners learned from their mistakes. The most common were planting too much of one thing; failing to heartlessly thin seedlings, which crowded mature plants; allowing vegetables to grow too big, with flavorless, woody results; and planting foods unsuited for the local climate. Seeing such success, officials also urged urbanites to join the ranks of gardeners, planting in the vacant lot next door or on their rooftop or in their front lawn or even window boxes.

Victory Gardens continued to be imperative even when victory was in sight. As nations occupied by enemies were liberated, the United States almost literally took on the obligation of feeding the world. Canada and Australia were the only other large nations undamaged by war, but neither had the climate and distribution capabilities of the United States. In Washington, D.C., the War Advertising Council issued an explanation in cooperation with the War Food Administration and the Office of War Information. Headlined "Get Busy VICTORY GARDENERS!," it spelled out the message:

WE MUST GROWN MORE IN '44

Every man and woman in the armed forces—and there are 10 million of them—eats 5.2 pounds of food every day. Every



one of them overseas must have a 90-day reserve.

The Nation's Victory Gardens must supply the food we need. Last year there were 20 million Victory Gardens ... This year the War Food Administration says 25% more food is needed ...

This means bigger and better Victory Gardens in '44, and more of them ...

Stake out a sunny, fertile spot. Plan what you are going to grow, and how much. Get your seeds and fertilizer; both are more plentiful this year. Dig up a hoe, a rake, and a spade ...

Ask another Victory Gardener ... Victory Gardeners are a chummy, chatty bunch ...

The point is, DO IT NOW. War Won't Wait.

Gardeners responded that year, 1944, and again in 1945, when the war in both Europe and the Pacific continued at spring planting time. Gallup's 1946 spring poll, however, showed that gardening plans plummeted by 2.5 million households. The poll's good news was that this showed the increases between 1942 and 1945 were genuine and motivated by the war; the bad news was that rationing and hunger would continue abroad for years into the future. Even the perennial nation of gardeners, the British, would ration fundamentals such as bread until 1948, three years after the war ended.

Victory gardeners, however, did not grow wheat or other grains for bread, and most of the problem of hunger even in today's world is more a matter of distribution than production. When called upon to grow what they could, Americans responded enthusiastically. Victory gardens were indeed a genuine factor in victory.

*See also:* **advertising; British women; food shortages; conservation; European Theater of Operations; North Africa; Pacific Theater of Operations; rationing; Women's Land Army**

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## V-MAIL

Developed late in the war, V-Mail was a new communication method foreshadowing the photocopiers and microfilm machines that would be introduced after the war. An abbreviation for "Victory Mail," it often was spelled using the telegraph's Morse Code for the letter "V:" that was "dot, dot, dot, dash," so this usage became "V ...-Mail."

The technology worked by taking what was essentially a reduced photograph of a letter on camera film, with less than an inch for each image. As with the era's reels of movie film, these photographic negatives stretched out many feet and were wound around a metal reel. That lightweight item then flew overseas with much more efficiency than heavy mailbags: the microfilm replaced mailbags at a ratio of about 1 to 37 and reduced airborne weight from about 2,600 to 45 pounds. Upon arrival, the image was enlarged and printed in a facsimile of the handwritten letter.

Much of the knowledge for the new technology came from spies who had developed tiny cameras and film, but expanding such scientific research and development to the general public would take decades. The war's immediacy for V-mail, however, came late in 1944, when military focus began switching from the European Theater of Operations to the Pacific. That war theater was much bigger geographically, with many far-flung islands best reached by small planes that could not carry heavy loads.

Although Europe's fascists surrendered with V-E Day in May 1945, not even top leaders in the War Department



Poster advertising V-Mail. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

## V-MAIL

knew about the Manhattan Project that was developing the atomic bomb: everyone expected that the war against Japan would last until at least 1947, so expansion of V-Mail made sense. The military wanted to make this investment because receiving letters from home had proved essential to morale. Throughout the war, government-sponsored advertising strongly encouraged letters to soldiers and sailors, with virtually all ads assuming that the civilian writers would be women. They responded enthusiastically, and already by 1943—before D-Day—20 million mail pieces went overseas every week.

By late 1944, letter-writing promotions featured the new technology. Headlines on posters read “Reach Your Boy OVERSEAS by V ...-Mail,” as a giant V and other letters reeled out of movie-style film. The message continued:

V...-Mail—  
the letters that travel on film  
EASY TO USE  
SUREST—  
FASTEST—  
and MOST PATRIOTIC

Your Stationer and Post Office have  
V...-MAIL LETTER FORMS

The form on which the letter was to be written not only used light-weight paper, but also folded to combine message and envelope. This standardization enabled efficient processing, which often was done by members of the Women’s Army Corps (WAC) assigned to the Signal Corps, the Army’s unit for communication and photography. Censorship rules still applied, of course, and like ordinary mail, V-Mail was addressed to just two locations: New York for the European Theater and San Francisco for the Pacific. The system worked in both directions, except that overseas senders did not pay

postage. Senders in the United States affixed a one-penny stamp.

She did not work with V-Mail, but Selene Wiese was a Signal Corps WAC in the Pacific. She had written from New Guinea in 1944 about the preciousness of letters from home, and when she was transferred to liberated Manila, it was clear that the new system was in place. She reported to her mother in April 1945, “I think every V-Mail you ever wrote is here.” Other types of shipment, however, remained important, as she added, “I got two packages ... [with] food, petticoats ... and Yardley’s [soap]. They were in perfect condition, and oh so much appreciated.”

V-Mail could not replace parcel post, and even some promotional posters acknowledged that, calling it “the next-best thing to a letter.” Writers also complained that the form did not offer enough space for a genuine letter and that it looked too bureaucratic. Without necessarily saying so, men in combat probably appreciated the stationery that women used, often adorned with flowers or other faraway feminine things. Many women perfumed their letters, something else that was lost with V-Mail.

Whether it was because of such personal dislikes or because the postwar military lacked the personnel to process photographic mail, V-Mail ended soon after the war ended. It was replaced by air mail, which cost the mostly-female senders a three-cent stamp; mail from mostly-male APO addresses remained free. When e-mail finally made it to the civilian world more than a half-century later, its scientific basis would be in telephone and teletype, not in photography and microfilm.

*See also:* **advertising; censorship; D-Day; European Theater of Operations; letter writing; Manhattan Project; Pacific Theater of Operations; scientific research**



WAC Private Wilkes and Private First Class Iverna Goodwin demonstrate V-Mail folding machine at an Army exhibit, Central Park, New York City, September 1943. *U.S. Army Signal Corps Photo, Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

## and development; Signal Corps; spies; V-E Day; wives of servicemen; Women's Army Corps

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## VOLUNTEERS

The war offered dozens of options for donated time: an incomplete alphabetical list would run from the Aerial Nurse Corps to the American Legion Auxiliary to American Relief Society to Bundles for Britain and Dogs for Defense; it would begin to end with WINS (Women In National Service), the Women's Land Army, and WOW (Women Ordnance Workers). Some of these groups existed largely on paper—WINS, for example, represented little more than the readers of *Ladies Home Journal*—but others were akin to the Women's Land Army in doing necessary and difficult work.

Like other wartime systems, much of America's voluntary activity was modeled on Britain's earlier need to meet emergencies. The American Women's Voluntary Services (AWVS) is the best example of this: it began in January of 1940, almost two years prior to the U.S. declaration of war in December 1941. Its leaders were sophisticated women who often were personally familiar with Britain's struggle. AWVS director Mary Steele Ross wrote a 1943 book, *American Women in Uniform*, that showed how she and others built voluntary services on British models.

Her book, however, was preceded by several 1942 books that were influential in raising awareness of the need. Keith Ayling's *Calling All Women*, Margaret Culkin Banning's *Women for Defense*, and Russell Birdwell's *Women in Battle Dress* all informed the public of the situation abroad and stressed the urgency of training more American volunteers. These early calls to action often focused on ambulance drivers, bomb shelters, mass feeding of people whose homes had been destroyed, and other systems that turned out not to be needed—but this could not be predicted at the time. When such preparation turned out to be unnecessary, some of the public adopted scornful attitudes towards volunteer organizations, especially the AWVS, but the need for such nonetheless continued throughout the war.

Like most of the era's public, the above writers assumed that the volunteers they aimed to recruit would be largely female. Men did, in fact, volunteer in some areas, especially for governmental agencies such as the Office of Civil Defense and the War Manpower Commission. Many such

bodies, however, functioned with taxpayer support, relieving men from the endless fund-raising that women did with traditional charities and new wartime groups. Moreover, such quasi-governmental bodies seldom included women, even if women were eager to serve. This was especially true of local draft boards, a volunteer activity for men that almost never permitted women.

To the most of the public, the word "volunteer" conjured up a female image, usually a woman whose children were old enough that she had some free time and was affluent enough that she had no work beyond housekeeping—and even then, a domestic servant might well be the reason she was not needed at home. Elizabeth Hahn, whose husband was a vice-president of Hahn Shoe Company, was such a person. She volunteered as a clerical worker for the Washington, D.C., ration board and told interviewer Roy Hoopes that "I think I did a volunteer job every day as long as I had a cook." The implication was that she stopped volunteering when her domestic worker found a better job, something that often was the case.

Although women such as Hahn were the target audience for volunteer recruitment, some experts soon realized that the war had changed the situation of many housewives, making it necessary for them to be paid for their time. This was especially true for wives of servicemen, whose income usually dropped when husbands were drafted. The call for women to voluntarily enter the paid labor force, however, also was urgent—enough so that some experts thought women would have to be drafted for defense industries. The Austin-Wadsworth Bill that Congress considered early in the war was based on that premise, before it became clear millions of women would transform themselves into "Rosie the Riveter" without such compulsion.

Nell Giles' *Punch in Susie!* addressed the labor need, as did *Out of the Kitchen—And Into the War*. Written by Susan B. Anthony II, niece of the famous suffragist, it stressed that even if defense jobs paid relatively good wages, such work nonetheless often was a genuine personal sacrifice. Leftist orator Elizabeth Gurley Flynn echoed the message with *Women Have a Date With Destiny* (1944), while Josephine von Miklos actually did what other writers urged. Because of her strong political beliefs, she gave up a leisurely life in wealthy suburban Connecticut to work at industrial jobs on its coast.

There thus was an element of volunteerism even in paid work, and some soon noted that employed women also made better volunteers. Imbued with the discipline of work schedules, they were most likely to show up for night and weekend duty and remain faithful to their unpaid commitment for years. Especially in the nation's overcrowded hospitals, such women did dirty and difficult work, often in stressful circumstances.

Because of a constant and severe shortage of nurses during the war, the Red Cross developed an eighty-hour course to teach volunteers to work as nurses' aides. Graduation from this course allowed one to wear a Red Cross uniform—paid



for, of course, by the volunteer. Yet despite publicity that glamorized the position, recruitment goals went unmet—probably because managers asked women to invest too much time before actually allowing them to do anything. Again, though, astute observers noted that many of these aides came to hospitals after a full day at the office or factory.

The nursing shortage never was solved, and in the war's last year, Congress seriously considered drafting nurses. Similar questions of volunteers vs. professionals were involved in the formation of the nation's first non-nursing military services for women. After Pearl Harbor, Americans had genuine reason to fear a Japanese attack, and especially on the West Coast, women volunteered as aircraft spotters, searching the skies for foreign planes. To expect smooth functioning in military outposts staffed by volunteers is almost inconceivable with today's professionalized military, but then there was little choice except to accept volunteers. Women's time and ability had become so undervalued during the Great Depression of the 1930s that some six thousand performed this lonely and tedious duty without pay.

Representative Edith Nourse Rogers used their example as a reason for Congress to create the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC). Speaking on the House floor on March 17, 1942, she said of the volunteer plane spotters:

They have done a fine job, and the War Department and the country are exceedingly grateful to them ... However, it is vital to efficiency and safety that the Army have control ... It is a service in which speed is the prime essential, where a few seconds may mean the difference between life and death. In Great Britain it has been demonstrated time and again that women are faster, more alert, in this work than their brothers ...

Rogers was saying, in effect, that if this work was worth doing, it was worth doing well—which meant paying demonstrably capable women. She argued further for the WAAC by saying that it “would make available ... the work of many women who cannot afford to give their services without compensation.” Her bill passed, as would bills for women in the naval branches. No one enlisted in the military to get rich, though, and such service retained an element of volunteerism for women, who were not threatened by the draft. The word “volunteer” became a favorite in wartime advertising and recruitment, used for even paid positions in the military and in programs such as the Cadet Nurse Corps. The Navy used it for its new non-nursing corps: WAVES stood for Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service.

Military women also volunteered. Especially overseas and near military hospitals within the United States, many servicewomen spent their free time visiting wounded soldiers, writing letters for them, and helping overburdened nurses. Other military and paramilitary women also served above and beyond the call of duty, particularly the pilots of the WAFS, WASP, and Civil Air Patrol. They frequently volunteered not only their expert time, but also their private planes and other expensive equipment—sometimes to be used by the very men who would not allow women to fly.

These women had no need to be recruited; they could see the war's crises up close and personally. Most women, however, got involved because of endless promotional campaigns for volunteers. Employed women were especially likely to respond to Business & Professional Women (BPW), which publicized needs in almost every issue of its monthly magazine. Like BPW, the League of Women Voters (LWV) was a two-decade-old organization that began when women won the vote in 1920, and during the war, LWV volunteers specialized in getting absentee ballots to Americans overseas.

Racial segregation remained the rule for virtually all volunteer groups, and its inclusion of minorities was one of the reasons that the AWVS was controversial. In the vast majority of cases, African-American women volunteered in their own chapters of national organizations: the USO, for example, ran dozens of recreational facilities for black soldiers, and their daily operation was almost always under the aegis of black female volunteers. In Chicago, innovative African-American women began WAND, Women's Army for National Defense, which moved beyond usual activities to offer child care and, according to author Emily Yellin, “a housing facility for black WACs in Chicago.”

Chicago also was home to the Navy Mothers Club, where these women volunteered their time and money to welcome about “five hundred boys” each week. The club's spokeswoman said that sailors “stop in for dinner ... or just to talk to mothers.” According to writer Patricia Lochridge, one young man expressed his appreciation for this rather unusual opportunity to talk with an older woman:

There are plenty of spots in this town where you can go to the movies, get a drink or dance with a girl, but this is the only place where you can forget the war and pretend you're home with your mother. And believe me, it's sure swell.

Not all volunteer activity was equal, of course, as it certainly was more pleasant to dance with soldiers at the local USO than to empty bedpans at the hospital. The public generally was correct in being suspicious of some types of volunteers: countless upper-class women spent the war playing bridge and tennis in their usual country club routine, while the motivation for their donated time could be measured by the amount of coverage in the society section of the newspaper. Many people thought, perhaps correctly, that volunteers for the Red Cross' Motor Pool had figured out that they could run both the charity's errands and their own at the same time, thus saving their personal gas ration for leisure driving. Motor Pool drivers also had the opportunity to escort celebrities who led bond rallies or recruitment drives—and some celebrities, too, were at least as interested in promoting their careers as in rendering a worthwhile service. And of course, organizations of women who opposed the war also were run by volunteers.

Most volunteers, though, made genuine sacrifices of time and money to help with causes that truly helped others in need. In addition to established organizations such as the Red Cross and the YWCA, new wartime volunteer options

gave many women their first opportunity for leadership. They honed these skills with work that often was ad hoc and temporary, created on the spot to meet needs as they arose. Without necessarily joining anything, women volunteered to sell the bonds that financed the war; they conducted endless conservation drives and collected everything from scrap metal to milkweeds for life jackets; they ran blood banks; issued ration books and taught others to use them; they invited military cadets into their homes for Sunday dinner. In dozens of different ways, millions of women volunteered to do their part.

*See also:* **advertising; African-American women; American Women's Voluntary Services; Austin-Wadsworth Bill; bond sales; British women; Bundles for Britain; Business & Professional Women's Club; Cadet Nurse Corps; Civil Air Patrol; conservation; defense industries; Dogs for Defense; domestic service; draft; housework; inflation; League of Women Voters; motor pools; nurses; Nurses Selective Service Act; Office of Civil Defense; opposition to the war; rationing; recreation; recruitment; Red Cross; Rogers, Edith Nourse; "Rosie the Riveter"; underutilization; uniforms; USO; War Manpower Commission; WAVES; wives of servicemen; Women's Army Auxiliary Corps; Women's Land Army; Women's Ordnance Workers; YWCA**

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# W

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## WAFS (WOMEN'S AUXILIARY FERRYING SQUADRON)

More than twenty-seven hundred women were licensed pilots by the beginning of World War II, and they were not content with the limited role offered by the Civil Air Patrol. They watched as women in Britain's Air Transport Authority successfully performed many flying functions—and even before the United States entered the war, membership in the Women Flyers of America, Inc. soared 900 percent.

These willing volunteers faced an obdurate bureaucracy, filled with men who could not recognize how valuable these skilled pilots might be. After the war, Colonel Betty Bandel would write in an official history of women in the Air Force that the male chief in 1941 dismissed the idea as “utterly unfeasible,” calling women “too high strung for wartime flying.”

Just six days prior to the disaster at Pearl Harbor—when a woman, Cornelia Fort, was in the air and witnessed the arrival of Japanese planes—*Newsweek* declared: “Aviation authorities have taken a sternly masculine attitude toward air-minded women ... On the ground that men are more suitable for flight training than women, the Civil Aeronautics Administration last July [1941] put a stop to women's participation.” Women who knew that they were good pilots and wanted to volunteer did not accept this quietly. According to author Russell Birdwell, they:

badgered the authorities in Washington, they set up their own training groups, they argued that, when pilots were so urgently needed, they should be given a chance .... And for a long time, all they got was a pat on the back for their patriotic eagerness, the grudging admission that possibly they could do the job, and questionnaires to fill out.

It largely was Nancy Harkness Love who changed that. Because she was married to the deputy chief of the Army's Air Transport Command, her credentials were taken more seriously than those of other women. Love was indeed well-qualified—and during U.S. neutrality, she had flown planes to the Canadian border for delivery abroad. Finally, in September of 1942, Love was able to announce the creation of the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron, or WAFS. Its chief duty was, in fact, “ferrying,” or flying planes from aircraft manufacturing plants to Army facilities in the United States, usually to pilot-training camps.

The second key word in the name was “auxiliary.” Like the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps (WAAC) that formed earlier in 1942, the WAFS also would be plagued by being “auxiliary.” Even more than the WAAC, the status of WAFS was ill-defined: they had no uniforms or other visible identification, and they worked on three-month contracts with no assurance of renewability—at monthly pay that was \$50 lower than that of men. Neither Love nor any of the women under her supervision held military rank, yet they were headquartered at a military post and were subject to military command.

Despite this uncertain status, Love nonetheless quickly recruited forty female pilots (and ten administrators) for the WAFS, who operated from an Army airfield, New Castle, near Wilmington, Delaware. The entrance requirements were stiff: women had to be commercially licensed; they had to meet a minimum of five hundred hours in logged flight time; the planes they had flown had to have at least two hundred-horsepower engines; and they have to have experience in cross-country trips. *Flying* magazine noted that these standards were “forbiddingly high” and hinted that





Members of the Women's Auxiliary Flying Squadron pose on the wing of a plane. Note the parachutes they wear. *Courtesy of Women in Military Service to America, Inc.*

officials may have set them so in hopes that the project would not succeed, as “the War Department has stressed repeatedly that the whole subject was ... experimental.”

The lack of a uniform was symbolic of that: it may have been an indication of at least a subconscious belief that the women would fail. It certainly caused problems. Without a uniform, it was unlikely that these women were different from other civilians, and every member of the WAFS had stories to tell about (understandable) mistreatment because she had no identification. While those in other services ate free at Red Cross canteens and other such facilities, WAFS paid for their food, clothing, and more—especially for the training that allowed them to join. Flying lessons were very expensive, but a woman had to have made that investment on her own. Male cadets not only learned to fly free of charge, but often were taught by experienced women who were forbidden to use that experience in the air. The only training offered to WAFS was a four-week course in army methodology—something that was of almost no use in the postwar world, where businesses (especially the booming airline industry) would welcome male veterans who had learned valuable skills in the military.

Despite these insults, WAFS signed their three-month contracts and took to the skies. After flying a plane to its destination, said *National Geographic*, “ferry pilots get back to their bases by the fastest means possible. Their transportation priority ranks next to the President’s.” But because of other exigencies, that travel priority did not mean a luxurious life. The writer explained that the women sometimes were called “the homeless WAFS” because they flew all over the country, never knowing where they would next eat or sleep. “After several months of puddle-jumping and haystack-hopping, they have made a log of what towns not to get stuck in.”

The WAFS ended not with a bang, but with a bureaucratic merger into the WASP. This cadre of female pilots was the innovation of aviation superstar Jackie Cochran: it was less elite than the WAFS, but still filled with experienced female

pilots eager to fly. Most WAFS transferred to it, and Cochran was named WASP director. The WAFS ceased to exist on August 5, 1943, less than a year after it began.

When the Air Force separated from the Army in postwar reorganization, names again caused confusion. The unit for women in the new corps was Women in the Air Force, or WAF; the understandable result was that when members were referred to in the plural, the acronym became “WAFs.” The similarity meant that the history of this unique wartime group nearly was buried. During its brief existence, however, the women of the WAFS flew millions of miles and maintained a spotless record of safety and efficiency in the service of their nation.

**See also:** aircraft workers; Air WACs; British women; Bandel, Betty; Civil Air Patrol; Cochran, Jacqueline; Fort, Cornelia; Love, Nancy Harkness; males, comparisons with; pay; Pearl Harbor; rank; Red Cross; travel; uniforms; underutilization; veterans; volunteerism; WASP

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## WAITRESSES

Much wartime attention deservedly went to the women who worked long hours in defense plants, but it may be that the war's most overworked class of paid jobs for women was that of waitress. In that era, by the way, this nomenclature always varied by gender: men who served food (usually in expensive restaurants) were waiters; women who served food (usually in cheaper cafes) were waitresses.

Many women, especially young women, who accepted this employment as the only work they could get during the 1930s were quick to leave it when the 1940s brought better opportunities. Higher pay was not the only incentive for going into defense-plant work: the new job slots in airplane factories or ammunition arsenals also were directly related to the war, and thus seemed more patriotic. Advertising and recruitment campaigns made such defense jobs appear much more glamorous than carrying heavy trays of dishes—while also serving customers with sufficient pleasantness to earn a tip.

This was a time before modern fast food, in which customers often provide their own service. Instead, waitresses took orders from menus that were highly individualized; some restaurants even allowed diners to create their own meals—as in "I'll have fried chicken, mashed potatoes, and green beans," even though the menu did not list exactly that. Such service required more time and attention—and there were many more diners than in the previous impoverished decade.

Although rationing of tires and gas nearly ended tourism, local restaurants often ended up with more diners, not fewer, because of increased travel for war purposes. Millions of soldiers reported to duty, came home on leave, etc., while some wives of servicemen also traveled to live with their husbands as long as they could. Civilians traveled to implement military contracts and governmental policies with hundreds of thousands of businesses. Single women who worked in defense plants and lived in rented rooms ate out as often as they could afford to, while affluent locals coped with rationing by dining at restaurants.

A woman who owned her café or restaurant also had to deal with food shortages—especially rationed meat, which was the chief reason that some were drawn to restaurants. In seaport cities or other defense industry boom towns, customers literally lined up behind counter stools and waited for occupants to leave. Nor could new eating establishments absorb the load because of limitations on building materials. According to author Penny Colman, about one-third of

restaurants in overcrowded Detroit closed because they could not get either workers or food or both.

The people who suffered the most from these factors were the women at the bottom of the chain, especially older waitresses. As younger women found better jobs, those left behind to do this hard work often were older women, but few noticed the additional stress that wartime conditions placed on waitresses. They got almost none of the media attention that went to women in new defense industries or to the sudden shortage of nurses and teachers.

One thoughtful exception was a writer for *Woman's Home Companion*. "In restaurants," the anonymous author wrote, "waitresses are in their sixties and even seventies. It hurts you to see them carrying heavy trays—until you see the pride in their bright eyes. Grandsons, maybe, in Africa?"

No laws prevented age discrimination, and racial segregation prevailed through most of the nation. African-American waitresses were limited to establishments that catered to African-American customers, and there, too, the young and bright left these jobs as soon as possible. The Women's Army Corps was integrated from its beginning, signaling new possibilities to black women. Like white women, they replaced their men in jobs that were stereotyped by race and gender, as black waitresses replaced black waiters. Directly serving diners, instead of being hidden in the kitchen, was seen as a definite step up. *Brown American*, a magazine aimed at this audience, confirmed this and particularly noted that because of the war, African-American waitresses were replacing waiters in railroad dining cars.

The major change that the war made, however, was to lessen the stigma that had attached itself to this work. Prior to the extensive travel that caused many more Americans to eat out, being a waitress often was viewed as low-class work with implications of sexual innuendo. Perhaps it was the tradition of tipping that made some believe that waitresses could be bought for sexual favors, but middle-class families definitely did not want their women to take these jobs, not even as summer employment. Except under unusual circumstances, Americans ate their meals at home—and they did not want their daughters to meet the proverbial traveling salesman who ate at restaurants.

The suspicion that being a waitress inherently implied loose morality was so profound that many landlords refused to rent to women in that occupation. Housing was extremely scarce during the war, especially near military posts, and *Reader's Digest* doubtless reflected 1944 reality when it reported: "Travelers Aid ... was unable to find a room in any respectable home of a large town for a soldier's wife with a waitress job."

Chain restaurants and frequent family dining out has changed this attitude; young people of both genders now call themselves "servers" and have fairly equal opportunity to rise in the restaurant business. That was not true of the waitresses of World War II, who worked long hours under difficult conditions for low pay. In feeding hungry Americans, they also served the nation.

*See also:* **advertising; aircraft workers; boom towns; conservation; defense industries; food shortages; employment; housing; landlords; munitions; nurses; pay; rationing; recruitment; teachers; travel; Travelers Aid; wives of servicemen; Women's Army Corps**

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## WALLACE, LILA BELL ACHESON (1889–1984)

Co-founder of *Reader's Digest* with her husband, DeWitt Wallace, Lila Wallace was extremely influential during World War II, when millions of Americans read that book-like magazine every month.

The couple married shortly after DeWitt had been fired from his job, and they used her savings to begin *Reader's Digest* in their Greenwich Village basement in 1922. Its unique format, which condensed the most popular articles from other periodicals, proved an instant success. Beyond making it easier for readers to keep up with many publications, the initial *Reader's Digest* daringly accepted no advertising, depending solely on subscriptions. Adding original articles to the condensations during the Great Depression, the magazine was profitable enough that Lila Wallace used her interest in architecture to design a suburban New York building that the company moved into in 1939.

*Reader's Digest* thus was two decades old when America entered World War II. Much of what it published during the war, though, was intended to distract readers from it: although always patriotic, *Reader's Digest* also was popular because it featured humor, nostalgia, and a positive attitude. It served an upper middle-class audience and did not aim to help working women in the way that *Independent Women* did, nor did women look to it for advice on wartime homemaking.

Instead, Lila Wallace ran a magazine that was aimed at both women and men: it emphasized national and international news, as well showcasing trends, including the transitions that women were making during the war. Among its original articles, not condensed from other magazines, were: "Nurses Aides Prove Their Worth" and "New Workers Speed Plane Production" in 1942; in 1943, typical titles were "I Am an Army Hostess" and "Sister to a Regiment in the Pacific." Eleanor Roosevelt wrote a 1944 piece, "American Women in the War," and in 1945, "The Woman with a Broom" was

not about domesticity, but instead was an insightful article by outstanding journalist Anne O'Hare McCormick, which was inspired by European women trying to clean up the ruins of war. A 1946 title, "A Smarter GI Jane Comes Home," echoed Lila Wallace's feminism.

The Wallaces did not hire as many female writers as some other periodical publishers (especially Cissy Patterson and Helen Reid Rogers), but a few women replaced men because of the war. One was Carol Lynn Gilmer: after earning degrees in history and journalism, she married a *Reader's Digest* editor who went into the Navy in 1942—and became "one of a couple of women hired in editorial jobs." Her daughter, author Emily Yellin, quoted a letter that Gilmer sent to her parents in 1945, when she left the magazine to join the Red Cross. "Hope you can see how the Digest life," she wrote, "is almost too perfect, with the world in the sorry mess it's in."

Creating a business that was "too perfect" was high implicit praise for Lila Wallace. Well known for her appreciation of modern art, Wallace displayed some of that in the *Digest* offices, and she also was known for philanthropy. She received the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1972 and lived to reach her ninety-fifth year.

*See also:* **aircraft workers; decorations; European Theater of Operations; housework; McCormick, Ann O'Hare; magazines; nursing; Red Cross; Roosevelt, Eleanor; veterans**

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## WAR BRIDES

The term "war brides" generally refers to foreign women who married American men as a result of the war. American women, of course, also became brides during the era, but the issues that swirled around them are addressed in this volume under such terms as "courtship," "weddings," "marriage," and ominously, "divorce."

Although the military imposed bans against "fraternization" with civilians, men who had been away from women for months or years nevertheless found ways to meet them, even in enemy territory. When the ban against "fraternization" ended soon after the end of the war, many foreign women became American citizens by marrying soldiers or former soldiers. They came from at least fifty nations, and





This was the last couple to be married under Public Law 717, which made possible more than 1,300 G.I.-Japanese marriages. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

their numbers meant the largest group of immigrants since Congress essentially closed the doors to massive immigration in 1924.

The exact number remains debatable, but the most reliable sources estimate that upwards of one hundred thousand women entered the United States as war brides between mid-1945 and early 1951. That the statistics remain imprecise shows in itself that historians have taken relatively little note of this phenomena. Author Barbara Friedman summarized this well when she wrote in 2007: “The experiences of war brides have been isolated from the canon of war history for far too long. With few exceptions, their stories have been related as a by-product of war—told as fond memoirs or as the fluff of romantic fiction.”

In fact, the influence that women have in the home and therefore in the culture meant that war brides greatly broadened American lifestyles. Pizza, for one small example, was unknown to most Americans until the 1950s. Although eaten in Italian conclaves in eastern cities, it arguably was war brides who popularized it across the country. They introduced their new in-laws to what initially was called “tomato pie” and then “pizza pie” and finally simply “pizza.” The same was true of many Asian and European foods, as war brides helped internationalize American cuisine and customs.

Almost any food had been valuable for most foreigners during the terrible war years, and women had good reasons to want to get away from the devastation. Moreover, they knew their chances of marrying at all plummeted because of

the killing of millions of young men. Europeans could see the pattern from their mothers’ experience with World War I: when that great conflict ended, Germany had some two million more women than men; in both France and Britain, the ratio was one million more women. The second war would be worse, and from its beginning, many European women were aware, at least subliminally, that their best chance of postwar happiness might come with an American soldier.

Fully cognizant of this, the military discouraged contact. The policy was motivated partly by the risk that a woman might be a spy, but mostly because commanders did not want men to be distracted from the military mission. Nor did they want naive young men duped into marriages that were motivated largely by a woman’s desire obtain American citizenship. That there was cause for such concern can be seen in the fact that one-quarter of these marriages ended before the woman ever emigrated.

Soldiers could socialize more easily with women of the nations allied with the United States, and those marriages were much more common than with brides from enemy countries, especially in the early years. Because the war’s major allies also were English speakers, weddings between American men and women from Australia, New Zealand, and Great Britain occurred almost as soon the war began. This was especially true in London, where tens of thousands of Americans mingled with Britons every day. In most of these early, easy, and unnoted weddings, the man was an officer who did not need permission to wed.

Enlisted men who wanted to marry, however, found themselves dealing with increasingly serious bureaucratic hurdles as the war went on—and as their intended brides became more unlike American women. Commanding officers insisted that soldiers understand the hazards of marrying outside of their nationality and be willing to follow through on the complex paperwork. Englishwoman Rosa Ebsary told writer Jenel Virden of the worrisome days when she tried to wed in 1944:

He would have liked to have been married before D-Day but you had to go through your superior officer, and his commanding officer was not going to let any of his men marry an English girl, period. So you just put in an application and that was it; it didn’t go anywhere. You just did not have any other avenue open except to get the girl pregnant. Believe me, some of them did that deliberately.

Chaplains, especially Catholics, indeed were more likely to intervene on behalf of a lovesick soldier if the intended bride was pregnant. Superior officers had almost total discretion to make these most personal of decisions for their subordinates, and some chaplains objected to such arbitrary authority. Pleas for a coherent policy were ignored, however, while the military instead seem to condone sex outside of marriage by issuing free condoms. Their own studies showed that three-quarters of overseas soldiers were exchanging in sex, but the military had a definite interest in preventing that activity from turning into marriage and acknowledged fatherhood.

Back home, the public looked at foreign women with appreciable skepticism. A poll published by *Woman's Home Companion* early in the war phrased the question in the negative: "Should servicemen be forbidden to marry in foreign countries?" The result was an exact statistical tie, with 47 percent on both sides; 6 percent were unable to decide. As the war continued, that magazine and others also dealt with the hot topic by ignoring it. The major aim of the media and its chief news-supplier, the Office of War Information, was to maintain morale: writers were not encouraged to speculate on what husbands, sons, and sweethearts might be doing overseas.

Nor was it always true that foreign families were eager to approve of these relationships, especially in the cases of recent enemies such as Italians and Germans. A German mother who had lost loved ones to American fire, for example, might well be reluctant to see a daughter marry an American soldier, even if that would lead to an economically better life.

Even in Britain, where relationships were best and where U.S. aid had been strongly sought, some civilians nonetheless resented the 1.6 million Americans who overloaded that small island just before D-Day. Their pay was about five times higher than that of British soldiers, and they did not suffer the extreme rationing of food and other items that Britons did. This understandable ambivalence about the dominating American presence resulted in complaints about "Yanks" who were "overpaid, oversexed, and over here" courting women.

Another factor in these relationships was reflected in more egalitarian American attitudes: because American men were more likely to have grown up in co-educational settings, they often appeared more confident with the opposite sex. With both self-assurance and money, they were more attractive to many young women than British men—and families were understandably wary.

The American Red Cross briefly tried to assuage worried families on both sides of the water by investigating the character of people who wanted to wed, but soon dropped that service. Both the invasion of privacy and especially the detailed individual case studies that were required proved not to the best use of organizational resources in wartime.

The longer the war went on, though, the more likely it was that a man established a genuine relationship with a foreign woman. *Stars and Stripes*, the Army's newspaper for soldiers, found that fully 50 percent of a unit assigned to northern Ireland had become engaged by 1945. *Yank*, a similar publication, printed a letter to the editor from an irate soldier in Ireland who saw no reason for the government to be involved in personal decisions to marry. He added that he had been away from home for so long that it might be American women who would feel foreign to him.

Once over the high hurdles of marriage, war brides automatically became American citizens and were eligible for free passage to the United States on military ships. Although the wait for that easily could be six months or more, the first several hundred women and children arrived in San Francisco

in September 1944; the Atlantic side soon followed with war brides from Northern Ireland.

As the war wound down and the military demobilized, such ship space became incredibly valuable, and many Americans were deeply angry that some war brides got passage sooner than those who had risked their lives in battle. After VE Day in May of 1945, the military reworked its demobilization plans to give priority to longest-serving soldiers—but resentment against war brides lingered.

Those resentful soldiers also included some women, especially the members of the Women's Army Corps (WAC) who served as escorts on what the media termed "bride ships." Headlines such as "here come the brides" were demeaning to experienced WACs who had served successfully in the European Theater of Operations, and some complained about being assigned to "baby sitting and other unmilitary work." Male officers on these ships, however, deemed these WACs "invaluable" and were eager to turn over all related problems to the WAC officer assigned to the ship. According to historian Mattie Treadwell:

On Army ships bearing Italian, French, German, English, and Australian brides to the United States, one WAC officer ... was responsible for the women's welfare for stocking the ship's exchange with supplies needed by women; for ... housing and feeding; for supervision of the nursery ... She maintained regular office hours when passengers could present their personal problems, which were usually numerous; she organized discussions on the monetary system, dress and customs, prices, products, and geography.

Still, many civilians aboard such ships tended to treat WACs as though they were servants, and as the military realized that WACs were better utilized in the occupational specialties for which they had been trained, the Red Cross ended up taking over this social-work role. Congress finally brought some coherence to the issue that the military preferred to ignore: it outlined policy with passage of the War Brides Act in mid-1945; the following year, it added the G.I. Fiancées Act for those who had not yet married. Although it was uncommon, a few WACs and army nurses also married aboard, and some male "war brides" also entered the United States.

From late in 1944 onwards, headlines told the story. "Twenty-four Thousand British Brides of GIs May Sail Here on Liner Equipped with Maternity Services," exclaimed the *New York Times* on New Years Day of 1945, well before victory was in sight. Two years later, in January of 1946, the paper still was running similar stories, with news such as "Argentina, 'War Bride Special,' Sails to Get Veterans' Families."

The most serious headlines about "bride ships" came in the spring of 1946, when a total of sixteen children died aboard the *Holbrook* and the *Zebulon Vance*. Accusations flew, with British people complaining about hygiene, especially at embarkation points, while others blamed the young (often French) mothers for negligence.

The military's response was a fiat that women who were more than six months pregnant or who had infants under

six-months old could not travel on government ships. They either had to pay their own way on private ships or wait until their babies were older. Meanwhile, of course, most fathers were resuming their lives in the United States—and perhaps having second thoughts about the families they had begun in another time and place.

War brides, too, sometimes had second thoughts. Many cherished an image of America based on movie glamour, and the reality disappointed. Some had not heard from their husbands for months, and a few were so wary about these vague relationships and/or so homesick that they refused to get off ships when they docked; others found themselves divorced upon arrival.

A survey of British war brides conducted in 1989—more than four decades after the war ended—found that fully one-third had considered returning to Britain. The vast majority who did not so would have if they could have afforded the trip. According to Virden, only 38 percent said that the adjustment was “easy”—and this was a survey of British women, the most akin to Americans.

In addition to disappointment with their husbands and with the new culture, many war brides had difficulties with their in-laws and their husbands’ friends. Americans were much more openly prejudiced in the 1940s, and for too many, marriage to a “dago” or “kraut” was unacceptable. Again, women’s magazines tried to ease the way, especially with *A Bride’s Guide to the USA*, a joint publication by the US Office of War Information and the British edition of *Woman’s Home Companion*. The Red Cross issued a similar work in January of 1946.

These were of little value to non-English speakers, however, and those women had a truly difficult experience. They were almost solely dependent upon the sincerity of their husbands’ promises and the goodwill of his family. Grandchildren often proved the key.

Other children were left behind by their fathers. Some men did not know that their girlfriends were pregnant; others did not care. Famed author Pearl Buck brought American attention to Eurasian children from the Pacific Theater and later wars, but no similar organization arose for abandoned women and children of the European Theater. Finally, in 1986, the Transatlantic Children’s Enterprise began. Under the leadership of Pamela Winfield, TRACE has reunited numerous American men with British children they did not know that they had fathered.

*See also:* **British women; courtship; D-Day; demobilization; divorce; European Theater of Operations; food shortages; magazines; marriage; Office of War Information; Red Cross; Pacific Theater of Operations; V-E Day; weddings; Women’s Army Corps**

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## WAR CAKE

“War cake” probably was the most popular of recipes to cope with wartime shortages. Also called “Egg-less, Butter-less, Milk-less Cake” and “Poor Man’s Cake,” it had none of the farm fresh ingredients that became difficult to ship in a time of crowded railroads and rationed gasoline. Although it called for sugar, it was brown sugar, which was not rationed because people of that era considered brown sugar to be much inferior to more highly refined white sugar. California raisin growers particularly advertised the recipe because their ingredient was key. Most versions of it called for:

2 cups of flour  
2 teaspoons of cloves  
1 teaspoon of cinnamon  
1 teaspoon of nutmeg  
1 teaspoon of baking soda  
1 teaspoon of salt  
3 teaspoons of baking powder  
Sift together and combine with:  
2 cups of water  
2 cups of brown sugar  
1 cup of lard (or vegetable shortening, which was fairly new)  
1 cup of raisins  
Boil this mixture for one or two minutes. After it has cooled, combine with the above dry ingredients and add:  
1 teaspoon of vanilla  
2 cups chopped nuts  
Bake in a loaf pan at 350 degrees until done, or about 30 minutes.



*See also:* **advertising; conservation; food shortages; housework; rationing**

### References and further reading

This version of War Cake is from the 1951 cookbook issued by the Ladies Aid of Trinity Lutheran Church in Jasper, Minnesota. Emily Yellin offers others in *Our Mothers War: American Women at Home and at the Front During World War II* (New York: Free Press, 2004).

## WAR MANPOWER COMMISSION

A true misnomer whose name never was questioned, the War Manpower Commission, in fact, had a chief aim of recruiting “woman power” into the labor force.

As millions of men went to war, often because they were drafted, the commission headed efforts to redefine America’s labor force in every area from factories to farms. At the war’s beginning, there was genuine consideration of drafting women for industrial jobs: America’s British and Russian allies drafted women for not only defense plants, but also as farm laborers and for the military itself. Congress debated this with the Austin-Wadsworth Bill and other proposals that did not pass. In April 1942, however, it created the War Manpower Commission to find the workers vital to victory. The commission, which seldom was referred to as an acronym, would exist until September of 1945.

Although it functioned under the Department of Labor that was headed by Frances Perkins, it was akin to other such governmental bodies in that very few women held appointments to it—despite its charge to increase the number of women workers. Republican Senator Clare Booth Luce may have intended a partisan dig at Perkins and her boss, President Franklin Roosevelt, as well as commission director Paul McNutt, when Luce spoke of the failure to appoint women to such bodies—but even if her intent was partisan, she was correct when she wrote: “the War Manpower Commission, which must recruit women workers for industry,...has fifty top-ranking officials, two of whom are women.”

Those two were Thelma McKelvey and Margaret Hickey, both successful career women and leaders in Business & Professional Women (BPW). They traveled the nation making speeches and doing radio and newspaper interviews that told women of the national need for female labor. Hickey also headed the Women’s Advisory Committee to the commission, a group belatedly created to address this vacuum. Members, in alphabetical order, were: Mrs. Harris Baldwin of the League of Women Voters (Washington, D.C.); Dorothy Bellanca of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers (New York); Madelle Bousfield, an African-American high school principal (Chicago); Sadie Orr Dunbar, a tuberculosis expert (Portland); Gladys Talbott Edwards of the National Farmers’ Union (Denver); Beatrice Gould of *Ladies Home Journal* (Philadelphia); Mrs. Lowell Hobart of the American Legion Auxiliary (Cincinnati); Jennie Matayas of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (San Francisco); and Blanche

Ralston, regional director of the New Deal’s Works Progress Administration (rural Mississippi).

Although fairly diverse for its era, the advisory committee had no real power, and it was up to Hickey to convey their recommendations to the “real” commission of fifty men. Susan B. Anthony II, niece of the famed feminist, also pointed out that neither McKelvey nor Hickey had “a voting seat on the important labor-management committee of the WMC.” She continued:

The Women’s Advisory Committee ... appointed in September of 1942 by Mr. McNutt, with Margaret Hickey as chairman, is the perfect example of cold-shouldering of women ... Completely devoid of any authority, it meets once a month for two days in Washington. Members ... must thus cross the continent once a month, to discuss in a perfect vacuum subjects over which they have no control and about which they have little first-hand information. They act entirely as individuals ..., having no field staff...and only one employee in Washington to cull the mountains of material on womanpower.

There was indeed a mountain of material on womanpower: despite the committee’s lack of staff and support, the issue garnered a good deal of publicity, and the media continued to press the urgent need for labor. Although congressional bills to subject women to an industrial draft never passed, commission director McNutt continued to warn that if enough civilians did not voluntarily take defense jobs, “they bring closer the day when a national service act may be passed and...an agent might appear at their door, registration blank in hand.”

Some people, of course, saw this as akin to fascism and believed that the commission excessively served the interests of business over labor. Because of minimum-wage laws and union protections that had been passed earlier in Perkins’ administration, the commission was not the union-busting body that some believed it to be, but it did have power beyond mere public relations.

As might be expected, some policies that directed workers where they were most needed also had the effect of limiting personal freedom. Women were not drafted for industrial work, but War Manpower regulations could have the effect of freezing civilians, both men and women, in jobs where that were deemed “essential civilian employment.” A woman employed by the federal government, for instance, could not leave that job to join the military without a release from her employer; nor could a woman from an essential defense industry enlist without a similar written release.

This limited recruitment for the new female branches of the military, as many of the best prospects for enlistment were exactly such ambitious women. In Macon, Georgia, for instance, the commission convinced the Marine Corps to end a local recruitment campaign for Women Marines because too many women were joining—and leaving their jobs at local factories. Some understandably concluded that the commission’s intent was to keep women in low-wage jobs.

Similarly, despite the ostensible priority of defense work,

former teachers were discouraged from taking these well-paid jobs and instead were told to return to education and its low salaries. Writer Nona Baldwin echoed official policy when she wrote in BPW's publication that the War Manpower Commission "politely but forcibly requested" former teachers "to take refresher courses and get back into harness."

The commission's male majority also so misunderstood women's actual lives and opinions that McKelvey and Hickey often found themselves putting pragmatic brakes on thoughtlessly enthusiastic ideas. Many men seemed to think that women would have to be forced into the "labor force," not understanding that, in fact, women had wanted jobs, even factory jobs, for the last decade. When plans were first proposed to register women for war work, McKelvey warned commissioners that premature action could do more harm than good. It would be unwise, she said, "to raise the enthusiasm of women and then see that enthusiasm turn to skepticism because a sufficient number of outlets for their productive energies have not yet developed."

After the economic transformation was underway with, for example, car factories retooled for tanks, and women went to work, the commission then became controversial because of its lack of consistent thinking on child care. Today's child care centers did not exist then, and McNutt discouraged industries from developing them. Instead, his December 1942 policy statement was a bundle of contradictions. "The first responsibility of women with young children," it began, "is to give suitable care in their own homes." That was followed, however, with an affirmation action statement rare for its time: "Barriers against the employment of women with young children should not be set up by employers."

Women and their advisory committee were left to sort out such ambivalence—but then, they were accustomed to male illogic on the subject of women's place. The long debate on that topic did not negate the immediately important aim—to convince homemakers that they were needed in new jobs. Producing the guns and ammunition and planes and parachutes and endless other materiel was absolutely key to victory, and women were a huge part of it. The War Manpower Commission and its Women's Advisory Committee achieved their purpose in recruiting women who proudly placed posters on their doors or windows: "Home of a Soldier of Production."

**See also:** Austin-Wadsworth Bill; British women; Business & Professional Womens; child care; defense workers; draft; employment; Hickey, Margaret; Luce, Clare Booth; males, comparisons with; Perkins, Frances; recruitment; Russian women; teachers; unions; Women Marines

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## WASP (WOMEN AIRFORCE SERVICE PILOTS)

Of approximately 2,700 licensed female pilots at the beginning of World War II, 1,830 were accepted for training with the Women Airforce Service Pilots, or WASP—and of those, 1,074 met its stiff standards and served. No other category of civilians can claim such a record of voluntary commitment as these determined women.

Some joined the fight against fascism before their nation did. When London was being blitzed by Nazi planes in 1940, Pauline Gower led eight other women who enlisted in Britain's Air Transport Auxiliary (ATA). Despite dangerously crowded skies over England and an uncommonly icy winter for flying, several dozen other American women joined them. By September of 1942, when the United States developed a similar cadre, ATA women had delivered 120 different types of aircraft from the factories where they were produced to military bases. Back home, other American women ferried planes to British Canada, and after the United States entered the war, they formed the core of the Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron, or WAFS.

The first woman to fly a bomber across the Atlantic was aviation superstar Jacqueline Cochran, who frequently won races against male pilots and ultimately set seventeen speed records. She both flew for and recruited for Britain's ATA, and already in 1939, Cochran wrote to Eleanor Roosevelt of the need to utilize the skills of female pilots. Like many prescient plans, however, it was ignored. The bureaucratically confused result was that at the same time that the WAFS was forming under Nancy Harkness Love, Army Air Corps General "Hap" Arnold granted Jackie Cochran authority to create the organization that became the WASP.

Initially called the Women's Flying Training Detachment and based at Houston's Howard Hughes Airfield, the name and location soon changed: the new WASP was based at Avenger Field in Sweetwater, Texas. Its first official member

was Cornelia Fort, who had been in Hawaii's skies when Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and then flew with the WAFS. She was very talented, but most WASPs would be less skilled: WAFS pilots were so experienced that they began to fly after a short course in Army administration, but the WASP required more training for more diverse assignments.

WASP pilots nonetheless were much better qualified than male air cadets, whom the military trained from scratch. In contrast, a WASP had to acquire—at her own expense—at least two hundred hours of certified flight time prior to enlisting. Moreover, she had to be foresighted enough to do this prior to the war: the skies closed to civilian trainees after Pearl Harbor.

Love and Cochran supported each other's feminist goals, and especially at first, there was little direct conflict between the two units. Both were quasi-military organizations of women who were officially civilians employed by the Army, and each had its own job description and geographical base. Commanders abhor confused chains of command, though, and the Army Air Force (AAF) therefore disbanded the WAFS after less than a year of existence. Most of its pilots transferred to the WASP, and the merged organization officially began on August 5, 1943. Cochran was appointed as director—without any military rank.

This quasi-military status would remain. Army leadership was so hesitant about the WASP that—even while recruiting for the Women's Army Corps and other female units heated up—the WASP was so unpublicized that few Americans knew about it. Potential enlistees wrote letters, made phone calls, and literally went from airport to airport trying to discover how they could join. Except for a few specialized aviation magazines, the news was kept so quiet that many of those who did know of the WASP believed that its existence was a military secret subject to censorship rules.

Secrecy was standard at the beginning—but no women's topic generates as much attention as what they wear, and it was the uniform that attracted media attention. Initially, WASPs were like the WAFS in having no uniform, but Cochran recognized the genuine need for one, and, with her usual flair, recruited Walt Disney to design a logo. WASP Anne Noggle described it as “a dainty little winged sprite called Fifinella,” a mythical imp “who helped the WASPs out of tight situations.” WASPs wore their Fifinella wings proudly, but unlike military enlistees, they had to buy their uniforms. Short-sleeved outfits for the Texas classrooms were affordable, but fur-lined jackets and heavy boots for flying meant significant expense—still another factor in keeping the cadre small.

Thousands of women nonetheless found the WASP and paid their own way to Avenger Field. By the summer of 1943, when *Life* told its readers about these “girl pilots,” training consisted of “a regimented 22— weeks.” Because they were already licensed pilots, their course was “a stepped-up version of the nine-month course developed for male aviation cadets.” WASPs lived in barracks, learned in classrooms and in the air, and were “on the go from 6:15 in the morning till



This WASP wears a heavy flight suit to combat cold on a sub-zero flight in an open cockpit. *Courtesy of Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

10:00 at night.” With the exceptions of formation flying and gunnery, they learned “everything that regular Army pilots master.”

To some extent, the WASP was based in Texas because it was there that thousands of male cadets learned to fly. When *Ladies Home Journal* finally wrote about the WASP in 1944, one pilot recalled of her training:

The air was full ... Not only our own planes were flying at all altitudes ... but also planes from Ellington Field. It was fairly certain that when you emerged from some violent maneuver and saw a lot of dark specks, those weren't specks before your eyes—those were airplanes!

Beyond learning to recover from “violent maneuvers,” WASP trainees also had to pass courses in night and instrument flying, as well as radio use. This was new to most, as civilian planes prior to the war rarely had a way to communicate with air traffic controllers. (Many wartime controllers were women, by the way, especially in the Navy's WAVES.) WASP trainees also had to pass tests flying various kinds of aircraft, and there were classroom tests on subjects such as celestial navigation. Women flunked out at about the same rate as men—although the longer the war went on, the better women did comparatively: in 1944, the washout rate for female applicants was 47 percent; for males it was 55 percent.

Studying for exams was not glamorous, nor was most of the work. WASPs took over the factory-to-field ferrying task that WAFS had done, which was not necessarily pleasant travel: it usually meant that a woman did not know where she would sleep or eat the next night. Airport employees often were hostile, especially at re-fueling sites where no one



was familiar with female pilots. The single-engine aircraft that WASPs often flew had no back-up system for emergencies: the small, light planes that they were assigned crashed about five times more frequently than heavy bombers. Open cockpits froze them to the point that a common WASP remembrance was the pain of thawing out after sub-zero flights. Real life was having rain pour down on your helmet and face; it was ice in your hair and painful sinuses and dizzying ears and urinating into a bottle.

Although Jackie Cochran complained that her women were assigned too much “aerial dishwashing,” some routine WASP chores were distinctly dangerous. WASPs flew planes with a large fabric target tied to its tail, and male gunnery cadets on the ground fired live ammunition at it. Rarely did they know that the plane towing the target was piloted by a woman. Others towed gliders as part of male-trainee instruction, and the assigned course took the plane and its glider over and through west Texas ravines. Glider towing also required dangerously low flying: WASPs were told to go no higher than the top of a windmill.

Some WASPs were test pilots. When a male cadet had a mechanical problem with a plane, a WASP took it up to diagnose it. This often meant deliberately stalling its single engine and then trying to restart it in the air. It might require turning the plane into a tail spin or other risky maneuver to see if the malfunction reappeared. WASPs also synchronized the timing of two-engine planes, getting them to exactly the same setting so that students would not be confused by engines pulling at different rates. Another task was breaking in new engines on repaired planes, which required ninety minutes of flying as slowly as possible without falling from the sky.

When *Woman's Home Companion* emulated *Ladies Home Journal* with a 1944 article on the WASP, it featured “tracking.” In this work, a male aviator said: “you fly a prescribed pattern, while [anti-aircraft] batteries sight and follow your moving plane. It’s a tedious job at all times, and at night, in the blinding glare of the searchlights, a mean one as well. It is also the kind of aerial undertaking at which women shine.”

That shining ability, however, rarely was recognized, as Washington, D.C., officials continued to discourage publicity so that even other aviators did not recognize WASP. Incredulity was a common response, as *Flying* magazine quoted a male pilot:

The overcast was so deep that Orlando had practically knocked off flying. It was the day my Thunderbolt was due [from the factory] ... The apron sort of filled up with guys who wouldn’t admit they were worried, of course. But they did want to see what was coming in through this stuff. Sure enough, a Thunderbolt broke out at about 500 feet, making a smooth turn to the end of the runaway and rolled to as pretty a stop ... as I ever saw ...

I ran up to the wing and out stepped the teeny-weeniest little girl ...

“Your plane, captain?” she asked me, and I nodded ...

Just then the tower man ran up. “Look here, you, why didn’t you tell me you were a girl?”

Other men were plainly hostile. Writer John Stuart, for example, told of the vicious “jocularity” that he witnessed from a colonel in North Carolina: when a target towed by a WASP for anti-aircraft trainees burst into flames, the colonel’s reaction was, “Hell! They missed the girl!”

Many skeptics converted when confronted with the facts, though, especially demonstrations of efficiency. “The WASPs,” *Time* concluded in April 1944, “have shown how to be spectacularly useful. They have flown more than 30,000,000 miles, towing sleeve targets for A.A.F. gunners to shoot at, breaking in new planes, taxiing A.A.F. officers around the country. Their chief core has been and still is delivering new planes ... They sky-hop from coast to coast.”

Aviation experts also acknowledged the WASP’s superior safety record. *Flying* approvingly published an article by WASP Barbara Poole, in which she said that “one of the few statistics emanating directly from AAF headquarters” in 1944 showed an error record of .007 for male pilots, compared with .001 percent for the WASP. Poole recounted a recent experience in flying the same type of plane to the same destination as twelve men: she had no problems, but “the men,” she said with outrage, “delivered two!”

Ten little airplanes, in various stages of disintegration, lay along the way. Each little airplane cost you, the taxpayer ... \$3000 ... A single pursuit aircraft costs about \$100,000. During the past twelve months ... the girls ferrying pursuit have had two fatal washouts. On the other hand..., the male squadron...had 62 fatal washouts—more than one a week. Even considering the larger number of men ferrying pursuit, computations on the accurate basis of miles flown gives the girls a lower percentage [of accidents].

Some of those accidents were caused by male dare-devil behavior. Several WASPs told of a colleague who was killed when co-piloting for a man who had just returned from overseas: showing off for his students, he crashed into a mountain—and the woman’s friends had to collect donations to ship her body home.

More than anything else, such dependence on charity demonstrated the problem of paramilitary status. Because WASPs were officially civilians, the Army did not provide life insurance or other benefits that automatically went to members of other corps. But because the work they did was so dangerous, no private insurance company would accept a policy on a WASP. Unlike any other group, these women literally risked their all—in addition to that of their families. At least one WASP fatality had been the sole support of her mother and siblings.

It was Cochran’s attempt to right these wrongs that ultimately caused the WASP to end before the war did. Other female military units had won legislation to equalize their status, but Cochran was a better pilot than politician, and she arguably mishandled the bill. She recruited no congresswoman as a champion, which the WAC and the WAVES had in Edith Nourse Rogers and Margaret Chase Smith, while Cochran depended too much on the AAF’s too-busy Hap

Arnold. Both were media darlings, and some in the Pentagon and the Congress may have resented them. Because the WASP never publicized its existence in the way that the WAC and WAVES did, women's organizations did not lobby to support it. Nor did Cochran allow her WASPs to write to their members of Congress and explain the situation. She followed military protocol in that, ignoring the fact that the WASP was not military except in its own mind. The result was that the WASP's regularization bill failed by nineteen votes on September 30, 1943.

From then on, it was a quiet downhill slide—even as the WASP continued to do well at its mission. Other Americans also were doing their jobs well, though, and as victory was increasingly in sight, women in every non-traditional field were expected to give up jobs that men coveted. The same media that begged women to help in 1942 made it difficult for them to continue that in 1944, and male pilots—some of whom WASPs had helped train—wanted their jobs. These men would gain valuable experience for postwar airline expansion, and the stateside jobs, of course, were much safer than going overseas.

By the fall of 1944, it was clear that WASP would go out of existence by the year's end. *Time* brutally concluded in October that “in a way, the WASP had asked for” its own demise by daring to bring its injustices to congressional attention. “Without thanks or ceremony,” said writer Rob Simbeck, “the WASPS were disbanded on December 20, 1944.” Whether or not they liked it, the women would be home for Christmas.

Some tried desperately to continue to their work. According to Simbeck, “Betty Gilles and others wrote to the Pentagon, offering to stay on for a dollar a year,” but there was no response. War would continue for years in China, and Teresa James attempted to join the Chinese Air Force. Asian men, however, were even more unwilling than Americans to recognize female ability. Eighteen classes had graduated from WASP training, but there would be few jobs open to them in the postwar world.

They were World War II's first veterans, but not entitled to veterans' benefits. More than three decades later, after the feminist movement revived in the 1970s, a simple Pentagon paper shuffle solved the problem of veteran status. That the Air Force finally did this can be mostly credited to Arizona Senator Barry Goldwater. Usually a conservative on women's issues, he learned that the target he shot at as a gunnery cadet had been flown by a WASP.

Since then, more has been written about the WASP than any other similar-sized female cadre, especially their motivations for joining. Many were akin to Anne McClellan, whose husband had been missing since the fall of Bataan, and twenty-two-year-old Rebecca Edwards, one of the war's early widows. Maggie Gee, one of at least two Chinese Americans in the WASP, was motivated by Japan's brutality in China; assigned to the Nevada desert, she co-piloted Flying Fortress bombers in mock dogfights to train gunners.

Cornelia Fort's motivation came with her experience at

Pearl Harbor; the first to join the WASP, she also was the first to die. Among other fatalities were Chinese-American Ah Ying (Hazel) Lee, whose death was caused by air-traffic control error, and Dorothy Scott, a native of rural Washington who was killed in a mid-air collision with a pursuit plane. Katherine Dussaq died on an AT-6 instrument flight from Washington to Cincinnati at Thanksgiving, 1944. Mary Louise Webster's death came close to that of WASP: she was co-piloting a C-45 that iced up on December 9, 1944. She was just twenty-five.

Most somber of all, one WASP death may have been due to misogyny. Betty Taylor Wood was the third fatality, and according to author Marianne Vergas, Jackie Cochran “was shaken to discover ... traces of sugar in the gasoline tank” of Wood's plane. Cochran would not imperil her fragile organization by going public with such a controversial charge, but she privately said there was enough sugar “to stop an engine in no time at all.”

At their old base of Sweetwater, Texas, a very simple monument recognizes the thirty-eight WASPs who died to defend democracy:

Jane Champlin	Dorothy Nichols
Susan P. Clarke	Jeanne L. Norbeck
Margie L. Davis	Margaret C. Oldenberg
Katherine Dussaq	Mabel Rawlinson
Marjorie D. Edwards	Glenna Roberts
Elizabeth Erickson	Marie Mitchell Robinson
Cornelia Fort	Betty Scott
Frances F. Grimes	Dorothy Scott
Mary Hartson	Margaret J. Seip
Mary H. Howson	Helen Jo Severson
Edith Keene	Ethel Marie Sharon
Kathryn B. Lawrence	Evelyn Sharp
Hazel Ah Ying Lee	Gertrude Thompkins Silver
Paula Loop	Betty P. Stine
Alice Lovejoy	Marion Toeves
Lea Ola McDonald	Mary E. Trebig
Peggy Martin	Mary L. Webster
Virginia Moffatt	Bonnie Jean Welz
Beverly Moses	Betty Taylor Wood

*See also:* **Avenger Field; Bataan; aircraft workers; Air WACs; benefits; British women; censorship; Cochran, Jacqueline; European Theater of Operations; fatalities; Fort, Cornelia; Lee, Hazel Ah Ying; Love, Nancy Harkness; males, comparisons with; magazines; rank; Roosevelt, Eleanor; underutilization; uniform; veterans; volunteers; WAFS; WAVES; widows**

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## WAVES

The Navy benefited hugely from the Army's earlier creation of the Women's Auxiliary Army Corps, or WAAC (later renamed Women's Army Corps or WAC). Because these acronyms generated countless jokes about being "wacky" or being "wacked," the Navy created its abbreviation first and then found the words to fit around it. Its rarely used official name was Women's Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service, or WAVES.

WAVES also benefited from the Navy's history with non-nursing military women during World War I. In need of clerical workers late in that war, the Navy had researched enlistment law and discovered that there were no limitations based on gender. Some thirteen thousand women enlisted as "Yeomenettes" or "Yeoman, Female" in 1918, the last year of what then was called "the Great War."

Despite the allusion to the ocean in their name, WAVES did not leave the states until late in the war—and then only to U.S. territory. WAACs, in contrast, served in several overseas fronts, while both the Army Nurse Corps and the Navy Nurse Corps had been assigned around the globe for decades. It was Congress that limited WAVES to U.S. territory, while the Navy's the use of "accepted" instead of "auxiliary" showed that it intended WAVES to be an official part of the military.

The idea began with Representative Edith Nourse Rogers, who phoned Admiral Chester Nimitz two days after Pearl Harbor and offered to introduce legislation similar to what she had drafted for the Army's WAAC. Nimitz was not at all happy about the proposal, but neither could he afford to offend the powerful congresswoman, so he temporized by asking his bureau chiefs for their opinions. To his surprise, "the Office of the Chief of Naval Operations responded enthusiastically." In the words of historians Jean Ebbert and Mary-Beth Hall:

Its vastly expanded wartime communications network could not be run by civilian workers. Because of the hours they worked (around the clock) and the secrecy of the messages they handled, communications personnel had to be under military discipline and control. Accordingly, the chief of naval operations (CNO) recommended that a women's reserve be built up without delay. The Bureau of Aeronautics ... went even further, suggesting policies that...anticipated most of the major aspects of the [WAVES].





WAVE locker ready for inspection, Naval Air Technical Training Center, Memphis, Tennessee, 1944. U.S. Navy Photo, *Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

The CNO followed up with an advisory committee of some of the best-educated women in America, and chaired by Virginia Gildersleeve, it led the search for the first officers. Representative Margaret Chase Smith sponsored the congressional bill; as a resident of Maine, she had a longtime interest in maritime issues and tenure on the House Naval Affairs Committee. Congressmen who opposed women in the military had exhausted their arguments in the WAAC debate, and enacting authority for the WAVES passed with little controversy. The WAVES began on July 30, 1942.

At the launching press conference, both *Time* and *Newsweek* quoted officials who said women would have “complete equality with men in the Navy.” This was not true, of course, given the WAVES’ limited geographical assignments, as well as other factors—but the intended point was valid: the WAVES avoided the very real headaches of auxiliary status that plagued both the WAAC and the female pilots of the WASP. Training for WAVES also differed markedly: two of the three WAAC basic training sites were at established Army posts, whereas the Navy sent WAVES to civilian college campuses. Colleges were increasingly empty because of the war, and it made sense to use these extant facilities. Moreover, WAVES commander Mildred McAfee was an academic who came to that position from the presidency of Massachusetts’ Wellesley College.

Thus it was not accidental that first WAVES training site for officers was at elite Smith College in Northampton, Massachusetts. Early enlisted women went to more plebeian places such as Indiana University. The trend continued, and among the colleges where WAVES trained were Oklahoma A&M and Georgia State College for Women, as well as private schools such as New York City’s Hunter College and Massachusetts’ Mount Holyoke. Like all other military training, WAVES went from basic “boot camp” to dozens of speciality schools that trained them for hundreds of defined military occupational specialties.

McAfee very much created a cerebral image for her women. From the first, the WAVES avoided references to cooks or laundry workers or other traditional “women’s work.” Instead it sought—in the words of *Education for Victory*, a Bureau of Education monthly publication—“women who majored in engineering, astronomy, meteorology, electronics, physics, mathematics, metallurgy, business statistics, and modern foreign languages.” Even more than WAACs, WAVES worked as air traffic controllers, and Betty Yaroch was among those who wrote memoirs of this work. WAVES also were chemists, cartographers, mechanics, sanitary inspectors, typographers, weather forecasters, and more. Many assignments required security clearances, and more than WAACs, they were apt to be in on the cutting edge of technology. Computer science founder Admiral Grace Hopper began her research in the WAVES.

Beyond the elite campuses and the sheltered nature of service within the United States, the chief difference between the WAAC and the WAVES—and certainly the one most apparent to a racially segregated public—was that WAACs were much more apt to be African-American women. Ironically, because WAAC Director Oveta Culp Hobby was from Texas, media attention quickly focused on the topic of race, and the WAAC was racially integrated from its beginning. McAfee, whose roots were in New England, seemed exempt from such inquiry, but the WAVES accepted black women only reluctantly. Almost a hundred thousand white women had joined the WAVES by 1944, when the first two black women finally were sworn in.

WAVES also were paid more than WAACs, earning an initial \$50 a month compared with \$21 for WAACs. WAVES had to be better qualified, however: while WAACs were required only to be over age twenty-one, WAVES either had to be college graduates or have two years of college plus two years of relevant work experience. At first, the WAVES accepted married women only if their children were over eighteen

and their husbands were not in the military; regulations soon changed to a somewhat more sensible rule that women could be married to men in the Army, Marines, or Coast Guard, but not the Navy. Even feminists initially thought this reasonable, with *Independent Women* saying, "Imagine what it would do to ... discipline, to have husband or wife outranking each other!" Yet as recruitment met reality, just nine months later *Collier's* called such rules on socialization "pointless" and reported that the Navy had "removed the ban against a Wave marrying a man in the Navy."

Recruitment for WAVES featured little of the cuteness associated with the early WAAC, with the usual image depicting a serious-looking woman doing serious work. A typical poster read, "There's a Man-size Job for You in Your Navy—Enlist in the WAVES." Another showed a uniformed woman deflating a parachute, and said: "Have you got what it takes to fill an important job like this? Enlist in the WAVES."

WAVES also benefited from WAAC experience with uniforms. Instead of depending on "government issue" supply, WAVES were given a clothing allowance to buy their uniforms through private-enterprise contractors. Chicago's Marshall Fields stores, for example, sent employees to WAVES at the University of Wisconsin, where the gym was transformed into a shopping mall. "First stop," reported *Business Week*, "was the blouse table. Each girl wore away one blouse, carried several others ... For final alternations, clothes went to Chicago by truck and were scheduled for return...by the end of the week."

WAVES could spend as much of their \$200 allowance as they liked. Some spent it all and avoided more frequent laundry, while others chose to buy fewer garments and keep the extra cash. Few other military units offered their members that much freedom of individual choice: in contrast, early WAACs at Fort Des Moines shivered for months without winter wear—and when bathrobes finally arrived, all were size 18.

Some women were attracted to the WAVES by its sharp-looking uniforms; the cerebral image that McAfee promoted in recruitment publicity also drew recruits. Maurine Harris of Arkansas explained:

After graduating from high school in 1942, my twin sister and I found jobs, as our parents couldn't afford to send two girls to college ... I found a job in a defense plant..., but while riding the train home from St. Louis, I was thinking how much fun it would be to join the WAVES and how patriotic it would be to wear the uniform like all the publicity portrayed. I could hardly wait to get home and tell my twin sister and come to find out, she had been thinking the same thing. She immediately quit her job at Jacksonville Ordnance Plant and we went down to the Recruiting Office and picked up the papers for our parents to sign. We did have a hard time convincing them, as our brother ... [was] already in the army overseas. The following day we were... sworn in.

Harris served in the Navy Medical Corps, working at the giant hospital at Bethesda, Maryland, and later at Millington, Tennessee. There, she said, "we all became very close ... With

the hospital being rather isolated, there were a lot of planned activities," including a WAVES softball team that sometimes defeated the male team. A wing of the hospital caught on fire late in the war, and Harris was proud that teamwork prevented any casualties. Although she did not stay in the WAVES after her 1946 discharge, she later summarized: "I love this chapter of my life."

Ohio's Bettie Gray felt similarly about her opportunity to use her mechanical aptitude. She was assigned to the Naval Proving Ground in Dahlgren, Virginia, and, in archives at the University of Central Arkansas, she wrote:

My official job was to figure trajectories of the gun tests, but that was as boring as watching grass grow. I have always loved mechanical things, and ... somehow convinced the powers-that-be that I would be much happier and more effective as an aircraft mechanic than a disgruntled numbers cruncher, so I was transferred to Hangar #1 to be an apprentice mechanic on a TBF torpedo bomber.

Joan Angel was a New York City medical assistant who also saw opportunity in the WAVES. Still, the familiarity of basic training at Hunter College was part of its appeal for her—and, of course, she was sent instead to training at Iowa State Teachers College in Cedar Rapids. Her memoir includes this enlistment ditty:

You're in the Navy now,  
You'll eat the Navy chow  
You'll have to be brave  
`Cause you're a WAVE  
You're in the Navy now!

Even in college dorms, the routine was just like that of barracks, with naval nomenclature used as though one were aboard a ship. Daily inspection was at noon and a captain's inspection was held on Saturday before any leave was granted. Angel lived in a four-woman room and said:

At the 2130 bell [9:30 p.m.], there would be a mad dash down the ladders (we *did* call stairs "ladders," walls "bulk-heads," and windows "portholes") to smoke ... This was also the time to make telephone calls and the line to the [phone] booth stretched all the way down the hall ... Taps rang at 2200 ... We had a roll call, with the Mate of the Deck checking each room.

Virginia Creed of Philadelphia joined the WAVES in 1942 because she wanted to see the country and was so pleased that she stayed on when the war was over. After training at Hunter College, she was assigned to San Francisco, where she and her friends lived a lifestyle that was almost civilian in nature. She said of her arrival at "the Waves Barracks on Sutter Street":

We were told we could sleep on a mattress on the floor that night and look for our own housing the next day ... Four of us lived in an apt. in the Richmond section of San Francisco and we weren't called back to the barracks for almost 3 years. Then we were moved to Treasure Island. All this time I had been working in the Travel and Transporta-



WAVES observe lack of oxygen at specific altitudes on air cadets in the pressure chamber, Naval Air Station Pensacola, Florida, 1944. *Courtesy of Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

tion office, where we paid the travel claims and issued TRs [transportation requests]. Very interesting work, and I would meet people passing through.

WAVES were more likely than WACs to be assigned to big cities, especially Washington, D.C. The city's streets had so many more WAVES than the Navy's men that, according to writer Eleanor Lake, a boy seeing a male Navy officer on a bus was inspired to shout: "Look, mummy, a boy WAVE!" More than 22,000 WAVES served in Washington, D.C., most of them in Potomac Park buildings that since have been torn down. Even when they lived in military housing, though, WAVES enjoyed a more relaxed atmosphere than WACs. On Sunday mornings, for instance, Potomac Park WAVES could go to breakfast in their housecoats, something never permitted in WAC barracks.

At Washington's Anacostia Naval Air Station, the male commander initially wanted WAVES to eat separately, positive that there would be "rowdiness and show-off tactics on the part of the men." WAVES officer Joy Bright Hancock resisted that gender segregation, and when WAVES reported to their first breakfast, the Chief Master at Arms said:

I never was so surprised in my life. The WAVES filed into the mess hall. There wasn't a loud word of any kind by the men. What is more, all of the men had their hair combed and had on clean dungarees. You can send me more WAVES any time.

Chaplains were especially likely to confirm the beneficial effect of female presence on sailors, and another naval base commander echoed the thought to Hancock. "At one time," he said:

to a great number of men, liberty meant leaving their stations for a night or weekend on the nearest town. The WAVES didn't all go out on the town and more and more men started to stay on board [on the Navy base]. Dances, organized picnics, athletics, and chapel attendance increased greatly ... Many men are attending chapel now because the girl

he is wanting to date sings in the choir. The mere presence of WAVES in the chow line brought more orderliness and courtesy than was ever achieved by the stoutest boatswain. And we do know that with more and more men staying on board, the discipline cases have decreased greatly.

Nor was it unusual for WAVES to hold authority over men. From the time a man entered the Navy to his out-processing, he was likely to see a woman behind the desk, often making the decisions that affected him. *Flying* magazine declared in 1944 that this was especially true for a Navy aviation cadet: "Waves will schedule his flight and log in his flight hours, direct his takeoffs and landings, pack, check, and issue his parachute ... refuel and make minor repairs on his plane, give his pay and make out his allotments ... and instruct him in mathematics, celestial navigation, [and] instrument flying." WAVES also were gunnery instructors, teaching men "to fire a machine gun, assemble and dismantle [other] arms, and operate and repair synthetic tracers." The report continued:

Out on the turret range, she is the teacher who shows the student how to fire at a moving target [at] high-speed..

This takes courage, too ... [Once] a student gunner in sudden confusion turned his turret away from the target towards the instructors and students ... The WAVE instructor, with battlefront coolness..., rushed to the turret to swing his gun.

Joy Hancock's memoir included a similar incident. she happened to be nearby when a pilot's landing gear malfunctioned. His radio also went out, and she said:

Though there was tension, there was no confusion. Each controller instructed the planes in her landing pattern to form a new pattern ...

We all watched the plane while a pilot/instructor went aloft waving a wheel to alert the other pilot that only one wheel on his landing gear was in the down position. Fire-fighting equipment and an ambulance took their places. the





Regimental Review in honor of the WAVES' first birthday, Hunter College, the Bronx, New York City, August 2, 1943. *Courtesy of Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

lad made it down safely with no great damage. But what I remember chiefly is the calmness of the WAVES in the control tower and the clarity of their voices.

The young men training to become pilots accept the WAVE tower operators and their instructions without question. However, combat pilots trained in an earlier day found it something of a shock to hear a woman's voice. Many climbed the tower to make sure he really had been brought in by a woman. When the war ended and the prospect of mustering out all WAVES was imminent, the word from many pilots ran like this: "don't take our gals away. Their voices are better and they have more patience. They have cheered us many a time when that was just what we needed."

WAVES finally were authorized to go outside of the continental United States in September 1944—after Navy officials persuaded other members of Congress to overrule Senator David Ignatius Walsh of Massachusetts, who had almost single-handedly held up the authorization. This was about a year before the war would end, and WAVES still were limited to the peaceful Western Hemisphere. It was a major disappointment to many, for commander McAfee had continually held out hope that her bright, well-qualified women could join the Navy and see the world.

The outermost point was Hawaii, and Hancock immediately went there to plan. The first WAVES arrived in January of 1945—and worked on their way over. One later told her:

We found typing aboard ship quite a feat. We had to type furiously when the ship rolled to port, and only shift the carriage when she'd [the ship] roll to starboard; otherwise, there was so much force that the carriage wouldn't move at all and the letter keys would pile up. So soon we learned to throw the carriage with the roll of the ship; it was like typing to music.

A Hawaiian band and leis greeted the first arrivals, along with many enthusiastic sailors. Among the WAVES was a Californian of Hawaiian heritage, Aloha H. Cassity, and others followed every month until V-J Day. Eventually, 350 officers and 3,659 enlisted WAVES served in upwards of a dozen Ha-

waii locations. Their jobs, one told Hancock, were "much the same" as in the continental U.S. "We worked in warehouses and offices, in control towers, gunnery schools and dispensaries. We typed, kept pay records, drove jeeps, worked in laboratories and wards, taught combat air crewmen. We lived in a barracks and ate in a chow hall. We wore grey seersucker uniforms and hit the sack at lights out. We learned, in short, that be it Maryland or Maui, the Navy is the Navy."

Both other military organizations and private industry came to recognize that women were superior to men at some jobs. WAVES, according to Hancock, "proved invaluable as laboratory technicians and were particularly gifted in the assembly and repair of testing equipment. They became operators of secret aviation ground control devices and participated in a highly secret night fighter training project."

Old salts who had opposed the entrance of non-nursing women into the Navy often changed their minds. *Time* reported in June of 1943—less than a year after the formation of the WAVES—that Navy men had been "suspicious of how women would bear up under control-tower pressures ... But now the Navy is sold." The commander of Navy Communications said in *Reader's Digest*: "Waves were the only employees I ever had that I didn't have to train on the job." According to the *New York Times*, Chief of Naval Operations Ernest King said at ceremonies for the third anniversary of the WAVES that some Navy men had "bucked and roared at the idea," but experience showed major efficiency improvements in operations run by WAVES. "They have become," he said, "an inspiration to all."

**See also:** African-American women; Army Nurse Corps; benefits; colleges; fatalities; Gildersleeve, Virginia; Hancock, Joy; McAfee, Mildred; Hobby, Oveta Culp; Hopper, Grace; males, comparisons with; Marines, Women military occupational speciality; Navy Nurse Corps; recruitment; Rogers, Edith Nourse; uniforms; Smith, Margaret Chase; SPARS; WASP; Women's Army Auxiliary Corps/ Women's Army Corps

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## WEDDINGS

Wartime changes in courtship and marriage meant great debate about whether or not weddings should occur at all. Magazine articles with titles such as "Shall They Marry in Wartime?" were ubiquitous. Although marriage experts (and certainly the military) usually answered "no," millions of couples nonetheless defied that advice and wed: in some boom towns, marriage licenses soared 300 percent. Sociologist Henry Bowman wrote disapprovingly of the 1942 facts:

In every section of the country literally hundreds of soldiers, sailors, and their sweethearts are getting married every day ... Everybody seems to be doing his best to hasten the soldier and his girl to church. Department stores are keying their advertising to appeal to the war brides, and many communities are removing the required time lapse between license and ceremony for the benefit of the serviceman.

Once a couple decided to ignore cautions from their elders, the war also greatly affected the wedding itself. Many weddings—as indicated above—took place in a great hurry, with only a few days of preparation. Although some were impulsive acts between virtual strangers, most were between couples who had a courtship history: they probably would have married anyway and simply moved up the date because the groom was leaving. They occurred quickly because furloughs and orders overseas could not be predicted. By the time that a man knew that he had a few days of leave before going into combat, often there was not enough time to plan a wedding or even to go home, and women instead traveled to his port of departure.

"On Fridays and Saturdays," reported *Collier's*, New York's City Hall was "blurred with running soldiers, sailors, and girls hunting the license bureau, floral shops, ministers, blood-testing laboratories, and the Legal Aid Society." The latter sometimes had to be added to the to-do list because state laws on marriage licenses varied tremendously. New York, with its requirement for a blood test to show that neither partner had venereal disease, was one of the stricter states. Couples jumped the hurdles, though, and just one facility—the city's "Little Church Around the Corner"—had hosted over two thousand weddings by early 1944.

*Ladies Home Journal* ran the story of a determined Florida woman: she had planned her wedding for December 19, 1941, when her fiancé was scheduled to be on furlough, but in mid-November, he got orders that he would be shipping out to the Pacific Theater of Operations before the wedding date. She rushed to join him in Salt Lake City, where they got a license and were planning another wedding—when he got thirty-minutes notice to leave for California. She drove through a snowstorm and a car breakdown, and after several hassles with two judges over a waiting period that was partly fulfilled with their Utah license and partly with a California one, they finally had their wedding—with air-raid sirens drowning out the music.



Corporal Emily G. Greer and Sergeant Norman Stogner, bride and groom of the first all-uniform Marine wedding overseas, pass under banners held by the honor guard as they leave the post chapel, Hawaii, May 1945. *U.S. Marine Corps Photo, Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

This was not the sort of wedding that businesses wanted, of course, and their advertising appealed to tradition as patriotism. Ads sent a subtle—and sometimes not so subtle—message that because men were fighting to maintain the American lifestyle, women had an obligation to maintain that lifestyle by spending as though there were no war. Store displays were likely to feature a man in uniform, but the woman wore the customary long white gown. Ads continued for the purchase of china and silver and linens, despite wartime shortages and conservation programs and rationing. Such ambivalence, of course, permeated almost all of the messages directed to women—in peace, as well as in war.

The reality, though, was that even more than in the past, it was the bride who made the decisions related to weddings. Very often, this even included the purchase of her own engagement ring. Some men made the effort to make this lifetime moment more romantic by sending a surrogate: one, for instance, asked his father take his prospective daughter-in-law to the town's best jewelry store and pick out a ring. Another wrote to his intended best man and asked him to take the intended bride to dinner and present the ring. Others bought a ring at their military post exchange and trusted it to the mail.

The ring purchase initially was affected by wartime shortages, but the giant South African mining company DeBeers hurried to alleviate any guilt about conservation. According to author Vicki Howard, DeBeers led an ad campaign assuring women that it was not unpatriotic to buy a diamond. Gold was taken off the list of war-restricted metals almost as soon as it went on, and according to the advertisements, gem-quality diamonds that were used in rings actually subsidized the mining of industrial-quality diamonds used in cutting metal for defense industries. "Diamond ring sales," Howard summarized of jewelers' arguments, "furthered the war effort as the they were found and mined with industrial diamonds; diamond ring sales helped defray mining costs."

Ring sales indeed became so guilt-free that the double-ring wedding ceremony developed during the war. Prior to that time, only women typically wore wedding rings: in the double-standards of the pre-suffrage days, it was acceptable for a woman to signal that she belonged to a man, but the reverse was not at all mandatory. The general growing equality of women in the 1920s and (to a lesser extent) in the 1930s, paved the way for greater acceptance of mutual fidelity symbolized by wedding rings on the fingers of both the bride and the groom. In all probability, too, a man on his way to war more profoundly appreciated the ring's meaning. Instead of hiding his married status, he wanted his peers to see this symbol that someone deeply loved him.

Beyond the ring, the wedding gown also was affected by the war. Tradition called for silk—but silk was fundamental to parachute manufacture. Early in the war, some brides abandoned their dreams and married in a used formal gown or even in a business suit, a fashion that still was relatively new for women. The American Association of Bridal Manufacturers, however, soon successfully lobbied for an exemption from rationing rules for the white silk of the traditional wedding dress. Later, it became extremely fashionable to make the bride's gown from the silk of the groom's used parachute.

Not all wartime weddings, of course, took place within the United States—or even in churches or courthouses. Army Nurse Corps (ANC) members were on the North African battlefield early in the war, and *Saturday Evening Post* told of a wedding between a nurse and a soldier there. Even earlier, nurse D. D. Engles wrote of her hurried ceremony as the Philippine island of Bataan fell. Knowing that the conquering Japanese would separate women from men, she made the decision to marry:

Everyone in the wedding party, including the bride, was in khaki. I had covered my khaki pants with a khaki skirt which one of the nurses had concocted and which she loaned to me for my wedding night.

There was no ring, no license, no bouquet, no veil, no Mass. It was Lent, a season during which Catholics are forbidden to wed ... Sounds of bombs were in the distance. Two male witnesses heard us exchange vows.

But there was a solemnity and a sacredness about the ceremony, performed in the midst of so much tragedy, that made us both feel that ours was no ordinary marriage. We



had taken vows which can never be broken.

We had a six-hour honeymoon before Boots had to return to duty.

That was in early in 1942, and regulations at the time meant that marriage officially had disqualified Lieutenant Engles from the ANC. Of course, she continued to serve in these overwhelmed circumstances—when only two men could be spared as witnesses—and such reality for nurses eventually dawned on the War Department. As the military expanded to include non-nursing women, more weddings occurred aboard, especially between officers. As recruitment became more difficult, it became easier for all women, including enlisted personnel, to walk down an improvised aisle and marry an American man.

Permission to marry a foreigner remained questionable, but, by the war's last year, military marriage had become so acceptable that Mae Simas, a captain in the Women's Army Corps (WAC) on the Italian front, attended seventeen weddings of women under her command during 1944–45. According to her records in *Women in Military Service for America (WIMSA)*, Captain Simas served as "best man" in one wedding; in many more, she acted as a father and gave away the bride. Many weddings, she wrote in a book she made for that purpose, were "on the patio or in 'The Convent' at the *Instituto Femminile* [Women's Institute] in Naples. Receptions were routinely held in the 'Inner Sanctum,' a large room" usually used as a WAC-only lounge. Captain Simas described the cake for a November 1944 wedding as "decorated with a clothespin bride, dressed in white with tulle veil, and clothespin soldier, clad in khaki complete with a cap." It was baked and decorated by another WAC.

Other weddings detailed in WIMSA exhibitions also came late in the war or after it, when peace allowed the traditions that women wanted. War torn France and Italy especially offered both the height of traditional wedding skills and low prices from desperate business women. WAC Lieutenant Virginia Nickerson, for example, married in Dijon—and after the dressmaker sewed both the wedding gown and a trousseau from the groom's parachute, accepted the leftover silk as sufficient payment. Nellie Adrian and James Ratican, a nurse and a pilot, enjoyed a dream wedding on June 30, 1945, at the famed Paris cathedral of Notre Dame. Adrian's beautiful gown also was designed by a French dressmaker from Ratican's parachute, and three hundred guests accepted the invitation, which was printed in both French and English. The maid of honor, however, wore her uniform, decorated only with a corsage.

Many hasty wartime weddings, of course, could not be preceded by a shower—but when showers were held back in the states, some brides valued used gifts, especially items made of metal. Because these were rationed, brides could not buy new pots and pans, scissors and kitchen utensils, and many happily accepted such used items. Another war-time change occurred at the School of Army Administration

in Conway, Arkansas: in a nice role reversal, WACs there surprised their male quartermaster with a shower when this World War I veteran married during World War II.

Showers were quite common by this era, but honeymoons were not. Wealthy couples traditionally sailed to Europe, but few middle-class people went anywhere after the wedding, especially during the Great Depression of the 1930s. The war, however, accustomed young Americans to travel, and honeymoons in places such as Niagara Falls boomed as a result. According to historians Cele Otnes and Elizabeth H. Pleck, this often meant "the first glass of wine, the first meal in a restaurant" and other joys that would become routine in the peaceful postwar.

**See also:** advertising; Army Nurse Corps; Bataan; boom towns; camp followers; courtship; defense workers; dress; "Little Church Around the Corner;" magazines; marriage; Navy Nurse Corps; North Africa; rationing; travel; Women's Army Corps; venereal disease

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## WIDOWS

Widows seldom were seen in wartime media. Women's magazines were full of advice on issues from rationing to rearing children, but they rarely acknowledged this particularly hard reality. The relatively few articles on widows, moreover, were published late in the war or even after it. A disproportionate amount also had anonymous authors or were in "lower-class" magazines such as *McCall's*—periodicals that few academic libraries deemed worthy of archiving.

Today's war widows learn their terrible news from military officers trained in grief counseling, but at that time, the crushing blow usually came from a telegram. In cities, it was delivered by a telegraph messenger; in rural areas, the mailman brought it. Some carriers knew the contents and tried to offer comfort, but most often, the new widow was alone when she saw the dreaded line, "the War Department regrets to inform you ..."

No preparation was enough, as a woman whose husband was a career military officer explained in *Atlantic*. She had decades of learning to live with fear, but the anonymous writer said of her husband's death soon after D-Day:

It was a hot day in Washington ... I heard the screen door slam as Robin clattered in and shouted, "Mail's here, Mother!"

"Letter from Daddy?" Nan called ...

"No .... Who's this APO? ... Uncle Bill?"

I took the letter from him and recognized Bill's handwriting.

"Dear Carol," I began, "I hasten to write this before you receive an official communication ..." The words froze on my lips.

"He was on a mission when his party drew enemy fire ... He hasn't been found ..."

The final telegram came two weeks later, with the War Department telling the new widow that the colonel's body showed that he was shot through the head and probably died instantly. "Wednesday evening, July 5, at 9:00 PM," it continued, "your husband was buried in the VII Corps Cemetery No. 2, southwest of Ste. Mere Eglise ..."

Her marriage was solid and relatively long, but widowhood could have a lifelong impact even if wifehood was tragically short. Lu Dovi, for example, a reporter working in San Diego, defied her affluent Tampa, Florida, family to wed a sailor: when he was killed just two months later, bittersweet memories understandably affected relationships with those who had opposed the wedding. She remarried and had children, but her friend Glatys Harsin did not. Harsin's husband has rested since 1944 with eight thousand other American men in a Maastricht, Holland, cemetery, while she dedicated her entire life to building labor unions. Both women found that being widowed in their twenties made them much more mature than others of their age group.

Neither bore children by the husband who was killed, and that, too, could mean unending ambivalence. Not having children made it easier to get on with life, but having them meant precious comfort to other women. Because most

widows were young, most children were very young, and many could not yet comprehend death. Some women dealt with this by avoidance and denial—to the point of seriously confusion. More than one child expected that when the war ended, Daddy would return from heaven.

Nor did the public offer much organized support for grief-stricken children or their mothers. Again because they were young, few women had mental preparation for bereavement, and their peers lacked the empathetic tools that are common with today's popularized psychology. Friends also were likely to have husbands or sweethearts at war, which caused them at least subconsciously to withdraw from the widow; she became a reminder of what might happen to them. Even young widows without children found themselves socially isolated, uninvited to events that formerly had cheered them in their husbands' absence.

Official support that followed a death was necessarily slow, and although well-intended, it nonetheless re-opened wounds at unpredictable intervals. After the initial telegram, commanding officers usually sent a letter assuring a widow of her husband's virtues and—with dubious frequency—said that he had not suffered. The flag that covered his casket might arrive in the next mail, as well as personal possessions such as photographs he carried with him. If a family requested it, the Red Cross attempted to uncover additional details of death and burial.

Ground troops in Europe were most likely to be interned with mass funerals, but even there, countless soldiers were so blown apart by explosives that they could not be identified—and this was even more likely for men in the air and on the sea. In addition to lengthy uncertainty about whether or not she was a widow, when death finally was declared, the lack of a body meant a painful lack of closure. Memorial services without caskets were not nearly as common then as now, and funeral farewells rarely happened without an actual burial.

Bodies were not routinely returned from active war theaters, but widows could request shipment home later. In 1977, a woman wrote to advice columnist Ann Landers about her experience with delayed mourning. Her husband went missing in France on June 10, 1944; he was declared dead the following January, but she refused to believe it and continued to see news items that gave her false hope. Finally, two decades later, she took her son to France to search for the grave. "When the kindly custodian asked us whose grave we had come to see, my throat closed. I couldn't speak or eat for 48 hours. I grieved as if my husband had just died ... I should have requested that my husband's remains be sent home."

But that, too, might have been a source of conflict and even more sadness, especially if the widow had not yet had a chance to establish a significant relationship with her bereaved in-laws. Often the two had not even met, and, of course, the parents had spent many more years with their son than had his wife. They doubtless wanted him buried where he had lived, which might be thousands of miles away from her. Differing religions also could cause pain, as Catholics could not be cremated in this era. Balancing the two kinds

of love and sorrow required sensitivity and nuance on both sides, and it is understandable that sometimes the result was still more bitterness and isolation.

Pregnant widows probably had the hardest time. Carrying a baby who never would see his father was a daily burden, and especially if a woman was a “camp follower” who had moved with her husband to training camps, she could be without family or real friends at this tragic time. Not all fatalities occurred overseas: in fact, cadets learning to fly at Florida’s many coastal airfields crashed so frequently that the popular saying was “a plane a day in the bay.” A pregnant widow then probably would take crowded buses back home, with no travel priority and no immediate financial assistance—and perhaps even no welcoming home.

It is almost inconceivable that “the merry widow” stereotype could survive in these circumstances, and yet it did. A writer remained anonymous in a *Woman’s Home Companion* article because she, too, had been guilty of earlier insensitivity:

“Hold your husbands, girls, here comes the merry widow.” I laughed at this sally a few years ago ... But now—a widow myself—I know [that] whether we like it or not ... we are [seen as] predatory females on the prowl for a second husband. We cannot talk to a man without learning (friends will tell us) that we have a new boyfriend...

Full of these new experiences, I asked other widows why they had never mentioned them. One plain-looking woman remarked succinctly, “And if we did, as a married woman what would your reaction have been?”

And then I understood why widows don’t talk much about this phase of their lives. I certainly would not have believed her. I would have thought she was an extreme egotist or that sorrow had caused her imagination to run wild.

In this era of open sexism, many men were eager to encourage the stereotype. Another widow quoted in the same article confirmed: “The wolf angle is one with which every personable widow I know, with *no* exceptions, has to contend. Always the tune is the same: You must miss your husband and here am I, the hero, willing to make up for that loss.”

This faux protection from the world’s hurts was abetted by the fact that almost all widows were in both emotional and financial need. It took time to process the paperwork for “death benefits,” as they were called, and even then, the amount was far from enough. Midway through the war, *Monthly Labor Review* reported that pensions were a mere “\$50 for a widow, \$65 if she has one child, and \$13 for each additional child up to a maximum of \$100.” These were monthly allotments, at a time when a woman with a good job in a defense industry could expect almost that much per week. Worse, the amount was the same no matter what the husband’s rank or how long his service—something that virtually said that this money was not earned, but was charity.

Government officials themselves acknowledged that widows could not get by on \$50 a month, nor support children with increments of \$15 and \$13. They estimated that a woman living alone needed a minimum of \$1,370 annually, more than

twice the \$600 provided by a widow’s pension. Moreover, even if a soldier took out the life insurance offered by the military, his widow could not collect it in a lump sum: instead, it was allocated in monthly payments of \$55.10. Not only was this still inadequate for a decent annual income, paternalistic bureaucrats had the temerity to say that women could not be trusted with more. “Knowing that few women have ever had the disposal of four digit sums,” a Treasury Department official told writer Zelda Popkin, “the government ... doles out the money, month by month, for 20 years to women under 35, for 10 years to women beyond that age.”

The subliminal message was that the society had no secure place for an unmarried woman: she was expected to remarry and be economically dependent on a wage-earning man. And yet the reality was that fifty thousand women had applied for death benefits by June of 1945, before the war was over, and that there that would be a demographic shortage of marriageable men for years into the future. A lump-sum insurance payment might have enabled a widow to buy a home instead of paying endless rent; it might have allowed her to build a business instead of facing the unfair fact, as Popkin said, that the “middle-aged woman must, of course, recognize ... her employability will decrease with the years.”

Age discrimination was not yet illegal, and except for a few cases of government contractors, neither was gender discrimination. Financial problems were to be solved by finding a man. The younger one was widowed, the more likely that was: about 80 percent under age twenty-five soon remarried, but the numbers began dropping precipitously with added years. A truly middle-aged widow—those most likely to have teenagers and the greatest financial need—had very little statistical chance of quick remarriage.

Like many other things, ambivalence also characterized the issue of remarriage. Some extended families not only were glad to see a new husband take care of monetary needs, but also genuinely rejoiced that their loved one had found a new love. Other in-laws, however, resented seeing their son replaced in their grandchildren’s lives and tried to prevent daughters-in-law from remarriage. Most families ended up respecting the widow’s privacy and her decision on this highly personal matter—something that was a big step forward in the historic status of women.

Many cultures throughout the ages assumed that a woman’s life ended when her husband’s did, and sometimes literally caused that to happen. Most societies assumed that a widow’s family could dictate her choice of a second husband. Even in America, the status of widows long was weak, with state laws that granted property and legal powers to sons, not wives. Beyond such legal restraints, there were rigid social standards for widows (but not widowers). Martha Washington, for instance, considered it proper to move to Mount Vernon’s attic after George’s death, and Civil War widows were expected to wear black and observe formal mourning for years. By World War II, however, American society generally accepted the belief that a widow was comparable to a widower; she could follow her heart, remarrying if and when



she chose. This altitudinal change was another example of the era's growing equality.

*See also:* **benefits; "camp followers;" children; courtship; D-Day; fatalities; magazines; marriage; pay; Red Cross; travel; unions; weddings; wives of servicemen**

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### WILSON, ANNA W. (1909–1999)

Anna Wilson planned the introduction of the Women's Army Corps (WAC) into the European Theater of Operations (ETO)—as a mere captain, the Army's second-lowest officer rank. Despite that humble rank, she was charged with implementing a new corps on a war torn continent.

When she and her small staff landed in London in April of 1943, Wilson wrote to WAC historian Mattie Treadwell: "we were introduced by the press and on short-wave radio, and were a little surprised to find ourselves near-celebrities." Britons, who had suffered almost four years of war by then, were delighted to have help—and Wilson certainly benefited from the fact that models already existed for British women, who were drafted for both military and civilian jobs.

Unlike the Pacific Theater of Operations, where General Douglas MacArthur discouraged WACs, ETO commander Dwight D. Eisenhower was enthusiastic about them, and Wilson had almost four thousand women assigned to military offices in Great Britain by D-Day. Some, especially telephone operators, were so badly needed that they went by airplane instead of the usual troop ship. Many worked in cryptography, photography, and other areas, but most were typists: "the argument for them," said Treadwell, "was that one Wac typist could replace two men while eating only half as much."

Many male soldiers who held the jobs that WACs took over understandably did not welcome them, but Wilson managed that difficulty well. She also showed personal courage that inspired her troops when Germany attacked with V-1 rockets,

or "buzz bombs," soon after the women arrived. "At first," Treadwell said, "Wacs were up most of every night," but they soon "worked without interruption even when bombs fell close to their offices."

When the war ended and defeated fascist nations were to be occupied by U.S. troops, male leaders showed their appreciation of WAC abilities by requesting fifty thousand of them for the occupation—an unreasonable goal in terms of the corps' current size and its continued recruitment problems. By then Wilson had been promoted to lieutenant colonel, but the men who made these plans for the WAC did not bother to consult her. "Colonel Wilson," according to Treadwell, "was not included in planning conferences for the Army of Occupation."

She accepted such exclusion as an oversight in massive army administration—but Wilson did not commit to enduring more than was necessary to win the war. She left the military early in 1946 and married. Her replacement was Mary A. Hallaren, who had been Wilson's top assistant and who went on to become the first head of the peacetime WAC.

*See also:* **British women; draft; European Theater of Operations; Hallaren, Mary; Pacific Theater of Operations; rank; telephone operators; travel; Treadwell, Mattie; Women's Army Corps**

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### WIVES OF SERVICEMEN

Whether or not to marry in wartime was a huge question; and once a woman made the decision to wed, she often became a "camp follower," following her husband to Army camps or Navy bases within the United States. Many wives of servicemen, however, chose to heed the nearly unanimous voice of military authorities and stayed home from the beginning. "Camp followers" also often returned home once their men had gone overseas, while other servicemen's wives made other arrangements for the time that they would spend waiting and worrying.

Those who were older and had long-established households might appear to have the easiest adjustment, but even that was fraught with new difficulties. The military, of course, did not acknowledge the emotional crisis, but it did point out potential legal minefields—making it clear from the beginning that a woman should focus on the possibility that her man would not return. Many states did not assure the property rights of married women in this era, and *The Army Woman's Handbook* developed a "list of essentials" to be prepared before a husband's departure. (The 1942 handbook, issued prior to formation of the Women's Army Corps (WAC), as-



American Red Cross woman writing a letter home for injured soldier. The photo that she holds indicates that the letter probably was to the wife of a serviceman. *Courtesy of American Red Cross*

sumed that “army women” were wives.) Women were told to rent a safe deposit box at a bank, and among the things that should be placed in it were copies of:

- Arrangements for allotment of pay;
- Power of attorney;
- Original and copy of last will;
- Original marriage certificate and one true copy;
- Original birth certificates of wife and children and one certified copy ...

This was an era prior to credit cards, and many, perhaps even most, working-class families did all of their business in cash. Even in families with checking accounts, men usually kept the records: the typical middle-class practice was that women charged groceries, clothing, etc., on personal credit at local stores, and men wrote checks for the monthly bills. Many women had no experience whatever with balancing checkbooks or handling other routine financial chores, but most dealt thoughtfully with their new status and the maze of military methods. In 1944, *Ladies Home Journal* published a summary of most frequently asked questions and answers:

Does my husband have to take out life insurance? (No, but he should)

How long after a man is missing until the payments start? (A year, generally)

Will we lose our house if I can't make the payments on our reduced income? (The federal government probably would forbid foreclosure, but there was no easy answer.)

Are the back taxes we owe suspended? (Again, no easy answer; it varied by state)

Should my husband sign the house and furniture over to me? (It would “save many complications in the case of his death.”)

Does the safe deposit box have to be in my name for me to open it? (“An emphatic yes. The military has had millions of furious requests from the wives of plain Joes who’ve

locked up their little secrets and gone to war. And what can you do about it? Not a thing, lady, not a thing.”)

Nor was there any assurance of time to do this planning. Many men shipped out directly from training, with no furlough home, and transfers within the states often occurred without notice. Margaret Wilder, for example, was a sophisticated woman with a secure marriage and older children—but nonetheless became frantic when she could not contact her husband by mail or telegram as Christmas approached. She thought that he still was in the United States, but long distance calls were expensive, and overloaded telephone lines added to the frustration: “the operator tried to get me a line for three hours this evening,” she wrote, “and when she finally did reach the hotel, all they could say was that you hadn’t left any forwarding address.”

This was a common scenario, not the exception. Even when the first letter from an overseas soldier arrived—sometimes two or three months after his departure—censorship was strict. On both sides of both major oceans, soldiers and civilians had to choose their words carefully, or the censor would mark them out with heavy ink. Often all that a wife knew was that her husband had shipped out from an Atlantic or Pacific port. She was on her own, in a world that had not trained her for such.

The first question was where to live. Some who had followed their men to training camps stayed in the new locale, which often were on the coasts where well-paid defense jobs were plentiful. Because housing was scarce and rent was high in such boom towns, married women often ended up living with other married women. Magazines were full of advice on creation of such temporary homes.

*American Home*’s “Attic Home for Two Navy Wives,” for instance, featured women whose husbands were at the Navy’s Great Lakes training facility; the only space they could find

was an attic, but they made it livable and stayed there for the duration of the war. *Life's* "Tripling Up" was about three waiting wives who lived together. *Parents'* writer Jane Carroll spoke to the advantages of this in "Raising a Baby on Shifts, a young mother shared an apartment with her college roommate, and both worked on different shifts in a defense factory. "As Sue and I figure it," she said, "we are two persons with three jobs. Our extra half-job apiece takes the place of the time we used to spend with our husbands and keeps us busy so that we won't worry and brood."

It was difficult to renovate and furnish these temporary homes, as building materials were scarce and even metal cooking utensils were rationed. That was a factor in the decision of many to return home and live with parents or parents-in-laws. Writers also offered advice on that, making it clear that a married woman should not revert to her teenage nest. *House Beautiful* offered insightful advice that dealt more with the newly ambivalent relationship than with decorating:

You are not a guest and you are no longer an intrinsic part of the family ... You've been used to planning your own meals, entertaining when and whom you chose ... But now you find yourself transplanted to another woman's domain ...

Make a hard and fast rule to maintain your privacy and independence by converting your old bedroom into a bed-sitting room ... Be sure to hang up your clothes. Make a point of emptying ash trays at night ... Make your bed, and help with the dishes ... Be sure to watch your share of the telephone bill ... Don't mope!

Janet Imlay, who was herself a serviceman's wife, expanded on the point of a personal sitting room in *Parents*, where she particularly addressed young mothers with children:

Do not forget to use this privacy once you have contrived it. Sit there when you are home evenings. This obviates the necessity of compromise on radio programs, reading aloud, and so forth ...

If you are fortunate enough to have two bedrooms at your disposal ... perhaps your bed and your child's crib will fit into one bedroom, and the other can house all your living-room furniture. Then you will be able to entertain friends in your own quarters.

Bringing young children into settled households, of course, was fraught with difficulty. Although grandparents could be genuinely happy to see more of little ones, daily contact invited problems. Writer Billie Maye Eschenburg warned:

It has been years since Mother's house has had to cater to infant care. Respect her neat kitchen ...

You are likely to resent Mother's role as the heavy suggestion-maker in things pertaining to Baby. Take it gracefully. She doesn't mean to be bossy. And remember that Dad and Mother aren't cold-storage octogenarians and it actually hasn't been eons since they safety-pinned you ... Share Baby with them.

Don't make sister Sue feel that you expect her to assume responsibility for your darling. She'll love doing it if it isn't an obligation.

Whether it was "Sister Sue" or someone else who babysat, most agreed that a waiting wife should frequently get out of the house to prevent depression. If she spent too much time in isolation, it was more likely that she would succumb to anxiety and moodiness that was not good for her or people around her. Even women without children and with jobs were told that they should seek an active social life to distract them from worry. Imlay suggested that they "plan something special for weekends," adding that her "own scheme was to work out plans for the home that we hope to have ... I get books from the library and send pictures of rooms" to her husband.

*American Magazine* echoed the call to spend lonely evenings and weekends at the library. It also quoted "a new national club called War Brides of America:" this group advised that "the best cure for loneliness is a full-time war job. Other tips: go to the movies, cooking classes, church affairs, look up old girlfriends, start hobbies." Movies were doubtless the most popular of these suggestions, and millions of waiting wives spent countless hours in theaters. Most came for the escapism, but some also frequented them to see the newsreels. In a time prior to television, this was the most practical way for a wife to keep up with what might be happening where her husband was.

Ethel Gorham wrote an entire book on the subject of women without their men. An sophisticated New Yorker, she predicted: "one of the things you will discover is how much you value the friendships of women ... You are going to find that intelligent women add as much vigor to an evening as intelligent men. Often more, because you can talk more openly and freely and much more honestly than you can with men." She also emphasized the importance of planning ahead to avoid depression-causing days: "If Sundays were bad," said this voice of experience, "holidays are immeasurably worse ... Watch out for them; don't let them come upon you without plans ... How desolate it is to spend Thanksgiving feasting on soup and crackers!"

Margaret Wilder followed this advice and continued her pre-war social life—much to the disapproval of her live-in servant, an older woman who thought the neighbors would gossip. After dismissing the objections to going out sans husband, Wilder finally asked him to write a letter to the servant and assure her that "it's okay if I have dinner with Tony once in a while." This was acceptable in her urbane world—but it would not be everywhere. When the advice-givers said that women should go out, they meant with other women or with male family members. In most rural areas or in immigrant communities of urban ones, platonic relationships between the sexes were uncommon, and a serviceman's wife seen having dinner with a man probably would find herself in trouble with her in-laws.

Ambivalence about just how independent a waiting wife should be also appeared in other ways. Writer Paul Popenoe creatively suggested that her best use of the war years might be to go to college—and then almost immediately argued against himself. It was true that colleges were desperate for



students and that this was an ideal time for concentrated study, but he nonetheless worried: "Will she, four years hence, with a B.A., unconsciously begin to feel that she is superior? ... A college education may be just the thing for her, or it may end by wrecking her marriage."

Those who advocated libraries and systematic reading lists, too, often proposed that those books be in the husband's areas of interest. Cooking classes were suggested far more often than, for instance, lectures on international problems; adopting hobbies—especially hobbies that husbands enjoyed—was recommended far more often than joining the League of Women Voters. The underlying assumption was that women would give up public life when the war ended, happily returning to husband and home. Until very late in the war, there was almost no suggestion that a wife might prepare herself for real problems in the postwar world—that she might have to deal with a disabled veteran or with personality changes that would make readjustment hard.

Perhaps a rosy view of the future, though, was key to mental survival in the present. Women washing clothes by hand understandably dreamed of a washing machine, and rationed food made cooking classes sound even more delicious. Because many servicemen's wives lived with reduced incomes and because the war economy offered little luxury, it was understandable that domestic comforts became goals. Some waiting wives implemented those wishes by practicing still underappreciated "feminine" skills. In her time off from her war plant job, for example, one woman filled her hours by monogramming towels for her postwar dream house; she needlepointed covers for future dining room chairs, haunted second-hand stores for china and rare-edition books, and thereby invested in her future.

Finally, some wives of servicemen were themselves servicewomen. After the women's military units began admitting married women, many women, especially nurses, saw this as the best possible use of their wartime lives. Some joined in hopes of serving near their husbands, but that seldom happened. Most joined for the same reasons that men volunteered: to see the world, to learn new skills, to win the war—and perhaps to escape from the expected role of a waiting wife. When her husband went overseas, Selene Weise was a Texan with an unhappy marriage and menial work. She joined the WAC, which assigned her to the South Pacific, and wrote to her mother of her husband:

He's somewhere near here, but as yet I don't know where. I've left an opening for him to come and see me if he wants to.. I have my doubts as to whether he is interested in a reconciliation; I'm definitely not. And if he wants a divorce, I'd just as soon go ahead and finish this business off. I have not met anyone I was very interested in, but I might.

Indeed, she soon was dating several men who were eager to demonstrate their appreciation for an American woman. One night she and a friend swam out to a ship: "That was a mighty surprised bunch of guys," she wrote, "but they were delighted. They fed us, we visited, had a great time, and then Jean and I climbed down the ladder and swam back to shore."

A bit of a poet, she still held domestic ideals and "Ode to a Happy Marriage" had just two lines: "A little home on a knoll; and you and me and birth control."

She was an exception among servicemen's wives, and Florida's Mary Lou Baker was even more unusual. An attorney who kept her maiden name, she was elected to the state legislature from St. Petersburg in 1942. There she sponsored legislation on property law that was a major benefit to women whose husbands were in the military. When her own husband came home on leave, she became pregnant—but did not tell anyone, including him, until after she won her 1944 re-election. In 1946, however, voters adopted the general postwar attitude that a woman's place was at home, and Baker lost.

Most women, in contrast, waited at home for their husbands to return, and then made the transition from being the wife of servicemen to the wife of a veteran. Many joined veterans' auxiliaries, where they exchanged information and got support from women in the same circumstances as themselves. Often such support was truly needed, as many men came home damaged in body or soul or both. All men changed in personality and values, even without realizing that had happened. They not only were exposed death and gory horror, but also cursing, drinking, prostitution, and other vices. They simply could not come home as the same sweet guy who left.

Loud noises could jar him into combat flashbacks, but too much quiet could leave him brooding. Unrealistic dreams of what it would be like to be home met up with the irritations of daily life, and tempers flew and tears flowed. Experts advised only endless patience and acceptance, especially with men whose physical wounds never would heal. Even before the war ended, over five hundred thousand men were receiving payments as disabled veterans. Disability benefits differed from allotments: they were based on the percentage of disability, as in the use of an arm or a leg, and not on the size of the family that the soldier presumably needed to support. The result was the many wives of servicemen had to go to work, carrying the financial load for the family—and creating another emotional problem for the disabled man.

Women were warned that men with injuries, especially facial ones, would not want to go out or have friends visit, and the isolated social life that a woman had endured in his absence would become permanent. Again, wives were told to have the wisdom of Solomon and the patience of Job, as *McCall's* advised:

Be gentle with the wounded man you love, then ... But not too gentle. Demand of him all that he has the strength to do and to give. Start him in on little things and lead him on to bigger and bigger adventures until he's used to his new self ... Only those with the vision of love can force him to help himself when it would have been so much easier to help him.

At a time when the average person had no background in psychology, such subtle judgment was nearly impossible. Even worse than physical wounds were those that were purely

psychological—at a time when few neighbors or friends had any capacity for empathy. Some men without visible wounds had terrible mental ones that resulted in sudden paralysis or inability to eat. Ed Savickas, for example, crawled out of combat feeling “dead and numb” in his stomach and could not “eat a mouthful” during the next two weeks. Sent home, he continued to be seriously malnourished for a year, with an appetite that ranged from “absent to finicky.” When he mentioned Brussel sprouts, Mrs. Savickas “tramped all over town till she found them—at seventy-five cents per quart ... only to see him push his plate away.”

That particular sadness affected only a few servicemen's wives, but all suffered in ways that have not been fully appreciated. The war took a tremendous toll on the institution of marriage, as well as on the lives of individual women. It rarely was a course they chose, but one that came to them through their love of another. Very often, it was the inspiration of being together again with his wife that kept a man marching, that made him go on to win the fight for freedom.

*See also:* allotments; benefits; boom towns; “camp followers;” censorship; children; conservation; courtship; defense industries; divorce; draft; food shortages; housing; housework; League of Women Voters; magazines; marriage; Pacific Theater of Operations; psychologists; prostitution; rationing; travel; veterans; widows; Women's Army Corps

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## WOMAN ORDNANCE WORKER (WOW)

WOW, or Woman Ordnance Worker, was the best known of several work-related clubs that were organized by enlightened personnel managers to raise the morale of women in defense industries. Although such groups occasionally held a party or picnic or other recreational gathering, their main purpose was as a technique for recruitment and retention of employees. They were intended to make a woman feel good about her new role, to offer a sense of belonging to an important cause, and to assure the college-educated woman that the very best thing she could do for her nation was to work in a blue-collar job. Putting gunpowder into shells all day was a menial task that nonetheless required exact attention, and being called a WOW gave the tedium a more positive image.

Other such acronyms were WAM for Women in Airline Maintenance and WIRES for Women in Radio and Electronics (meaning radio as a military communication device, not commercial radio). Probably because of the positive, awe-struck connotation of “WOW,” it became the most popular acronym, especially in advertisements that recruited women into defense jobs. Once there, women also needed assurance that it was no longer taboo to wear pants: until the war, only dresses were worn in public. Factory work, however, often required pants, and the WOW image told the public that these changes in dress should be applauded.

One poster, for example, showed a woman wearing a dark shirt, along with pants and a belt. Aside her was a large ammunition shell, and along the right margin were the caps of uniforms that were worn by women who served in the Red Cross, Navy Nurse Corps, Army Nurse Corps, the Navy's WAVES, and the Army's WAAC—and, at the top of these, was a turban labeled “WOW.” It was a simple scarf, not a cap, but the fabric was imprinted with a stylized version of the longtime symbol of the Army Ordnance Corps, a flaming bomb. The bottom of the poster read: “She's a WOW—Woman Ordnance Worker.”

WOW began in factories around the Chicago area, and, according to Iowa historian Lisa Ossian, expanded to muni-



"The girl he left behind..." Adolph Treidler poster advertising the WOW program. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

tions plants there. By May of 1943, *Business Week* said that there were some thirty-three thousand members of WOW working in "dozens" of war plants by May of 1943. Clearly designed to encourage a sense of belonging, it offered the usual monthly meetings of other clubs, but also had ranks to give a quasi-military feel. "Three months of perfect attendance on the job and at chapter meetings," the article continued, "earn any WOW the rank of private first class, with the privilege of wearing appropriate insignia and her WOW uniform."

In all likelihood, a woman had to buy that uniform herself, and because the munitions industry was relatively low-paid work, the uniform rarely is seen in photographs of factories. The uniform, like the organization it represented, was more the creation of male managers and advertisers than a reflection of true grass-roots activity by women. Still, being a WOW publicized women's war work and gave them deserved recognition as vital to victory.

*See also:* **advertising; Army Nurse Corps, defense workers; dress; electronics industry; employment; munitions industry; Navy Nurse Corps; radio; rank; recreation; recruitment; "slander campaign"; Red Cross; uniforms; WAAC; WAVES**

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## WOMEN'S ARMED SERVICES INTEGRATION ACT (1948)

When the war ended, most career military men were unanimous in their ambivalence: they wanted to end the new units that had been created for women—while they wanted their individual WAC secretary or WAVES bookkeeper or Marine driver to stay. It took three years for the Pentagon and Congress to think through the problem of what to do with women who remained eager to serve their nation.

Most women, like most men, wanted to return to civilian life. Although some stayed on—especially members of the Women's Army Corps (WAC) who had an opportunity to work in occupied Europe or Japan—most women unceremoniously demobilized. Few even availed themselves of the G.I. Bill or other veterans' benefits; instead, they married and created the baby boom that characterized the postwar years.

Some, though, had come to love the military and wanted to make it their life. For them, the years between 1945 and 1948 were fraught with uncertainty. The last planned demobilization of 20,000 wartime WACs occurred in March 1946, and by the end of that year, according to WAC historian Mattie Treadwell, there "remained only 8,461 enlisted women and 1,194 officers. These women...had already waited eighteen months since the end of the war for a decision. Another eighteen months awaited them."

Part of the reason for the delay was that larger changes had to come first: the War Department became the Department of Defense, and the Air Force separated from the Army and the Navy (and its affiliates, the Marine Corps and the Coast Guard). In addition, President Harry Truman of Missouri was sincere in his commitment to racial integration, and so gender integration became the last priority of decision-makers. As had been the case with the creation of women's units at the war's beginning, it was women in Congress, especially Frances Bolton and Margaret Chase Smith, who led the fight for other women.

Smith was the only woman on the crucial House Armed Services Committee, and she displayed exceptional parliamentary skill throughout. She had strong lobbying support from organizations such as Business and Professional Women and the American Association of University Women—but Westray Battle Boyce, who replaced Oveta Culp Hobby as WAC director in mid-1945, demonstrated an odd ambivalence. Indeed, when Major General Willard Paul directed



Boyce to plan for permanency, Treadwell said that Boyce “complied, although expressing disfavor, saying that the Army would not desire such a group unless it was as efficient as in the past, which appeared impossible.”

All along the process, Boyce had to be pushed, and it was over her objections that General Paul authorized a re-entry program as a mechanism for women to stay in the WAC while their superiors debated its existence. The same pattern occurred with the Women Marines: according to historian Mary Stremlow, a male colonel opted to present testimony to the relevant Senate committee “in place of Major [Julia] Hamlet because he feared that she, due to her own doubts, would not be convincing enough.”

Other women replaced the doubters in 1947, as WAC Director Mary A. Hallaren and her chief deputy, Emily C. Davis, worked enthusiastically for the legislation. They were joined by women from the naval branches, especially Joy Bright Hancock of the WAVES and Katherine Towle of the Women Marines. The separate bills were combined into one that eventually would be known as Public Law 625. All congresswomen supported it, and they had important aid from many high-ranking men in the Pentagon: the entire effort, in fact, demonstrated that the more closely a man had worked with women during the war, the stronger was his support for them in the peacetime military.

Positive statements from Secretary of Defense James Forrestal, as well as top generals such as Omar Bradley of the European Theater of Operations and Admiral Chester Nimitz of the Pacific Theater were key to turning around reluctant congressmen. Treadwell quoted testimony from Supreme ETO Commander Dwight D. Eisenhower to the House Armed Service Committee:

When this project was proposed in the beginning of the war, like most old soldiers, I was violently against it..., [but] every phase of the record they compiled convinced me of the error of my first reaction.

In tasks for which they are particularly suited, Wacs are more valuable than men, and fewer of them are required to perform a given amount of work ... In the disciplinary field they were...a model for the Army ... More than this, their influence throughout the whole command was good .... Their presence was always reflected around a headquarters in improved conduct on the part of all.

In the event of another war ... it is my conviction that everybody in this country would serve under some form of call to duty.

Like Eisenhower, former First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt also supported universal training for both men and women, and she spoke out for women in the peacetime military. Those views prevailed in the Senate, which passed the bill on July 23, 1947. It would take most of another year, however, for the House to act. Support was common at the highest executive levels—but some women objected to this historic change in the status of women. Educator Dorothy Schaffter, for example, was wholly negative in her study, *What Comes of Training Women for War*. More important,

many ordinary GI Joes bombarded their congressmen with opposition.

As in the earlier “slander campaign,” their dark allusions to the dangers of women in the military often could not stand the light of day. Lacking any logical, provable arguments, two congressmen even expressed the desire to close the hearing to the public so that they could repeat the salacious stories they had heard. A Navy veteran came closer to the truth when he told the congressional committee that he knew they all had received calls from “men objecting to the idea of having to take orders from a WAVES officer.” Countless sailors had already survived that experience, but this point was forgotten as opposition to women grew within the lower ranks of the military. Memos to General Paul reported that WAC applicants for re-entry “practically had to fight their way back into the Army” and that male recruiters told women who wanted to enlist that they should “go home and forget it.”

The legislative issue was further complicated by the fact that the draft would remain for three decades following World War II. The assumption always had been the women were exempt from the draft—even though the House had voted to draft women with the Nurses Selective Service Act of 1945. (It was taken for granted, of course, that the Army Nurse Corps, created in 1901, and the Navy Nurse Corps, created in 1908, would continue their stereotypical roles; there was no debate on maintaining those all-female corps.) Even though the proposed legislation did not hint at drafting women, that specter was a factor in the bill’s initial failure.

Smith did not give up, and although she was busy running a successful campaign for the Senate in 1948, she worked out additional compromises to make the idea acceptable. Still, the debate was heated enough that the House sergeant-at-arms closed the doors and forced members into their seats for the final vote on June 2, 1948. The bill passed 206 to 133, with 91 abstentions, and President Truman signed it into law ten days later.

The final legislation was not all that it could be, but it did achieve the basic objective of carving a place for women in the peacetime military. Navy women, including the WAVES, SPARS, and Women Marines were integrated directly into their branch of the Navy, while the Army and the new Air Force retained their all-female corps. The Women’s Army Corps (WAC) continued as it had been during the war, while the Air Force created Women in the Air Force, or WAF. When that was referred to in the plural, as WAFs, it understandably caused confusion it with the earlier WAFS, or Women’s Air Ferrying Squadron—but alphabet soups of acronyms are the rule, not the exception, in the military.

The final bill was indeed a compromise, as it enacted many restrictions based on gender. Women could hold no rank higher than lieutenant colonel (or commander in the naval branches). They were specifically excluded from the elite military academies at West Point, Annapolis, and the new Air Force Academy in Colorado. They could not be assigned to any MOS (military occupational speciality) that would be likely to bring them into combat. Their pay would

be significantly less than men of the same rank because of provisions in the bill that disallowed women from making allotments to their families as men did.

All of these limitations and more provided fodder for the Equal Rights Amendment that had been languishing in Congress since 1923—but given that Congress was as conservative as it was on this Pentagon-supported bill, there was no hope for the ERA. Instead, the Women's Armed Services Integration Act was rightfully considered a huge victory, a law that could not have been foretold just a few years earlier.

*See also:* **allotments; Army Nurse Corps; birth rate/ birth control; Bolton, Frances; Business & Professional Women's Club; draft; Equal Rights Amendment; GI Bill; Hancock, Joy Bright; males, comparisons with; Marines; marriage; military occupational speciality; Navy Nurse Corps; Nurses Selective Service Act; occupied Europe; occupied Japan; pay; postwar; rank; Roosevelt, Eleanor; "slander campaign"; Smith, Margaret Chase; veterans; WAVES; Women's Army Corps (WAC)**

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## WOMEN'S ARMY AUXILIARY CORPS/ WOMEN'S ARMY CORPS (WAAC/WAC)

The first and most important of women's non-nursing military units was the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps (WAAC), which later became the Women's Army Corps, or WAC. It had many models, including the Army Nurse Corps, which began in 1901, and the Navy Nurse Corps, which followed in 1908. In 1918, during the final year of World War I, the Navy and Marine Corps enlisted women who were not nurses. Even more relevant models were the new female units built by allies in Australia, Britain, Canada, and Russia prior to U.S. entrance into World War II.

Literally fighting for its life in 1940, Britain drafted women for compulsory service in agricultural and industrial work, as well as for the military. Its Auxiliary Territorial Service (ATS) was the chief model for the U.S. Army's WAAC, while its WRENS (Women's Royal Navy Service) was the model for the Navy's WAVES, as well as for the Coast Guard's SPARS and the Women Marines. Finally, Britain's Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF) inspired the American units of the WAFFS (Women's Auxilliary Ferrying Squadron) and the WASP (Women's Airforce Service Pilots). While the United States remained neutral in the fight against Hitler, some American women were so devoted to democracy that they crossed the Atlantic and joined these British services. Among them were WASP pilot Jacqueline Cochran and ATS enlistee Mary Lee Settle.

Representative Edith Nourse Rogers had followed the issue since World War I, and she introduced a bill in Congress to create the first American version of these military options in May of 1941. It was ignored until the December 7th Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor changed everything. Americans lived in genuine terror of another attack, especially on the West Coast, where some six thousand civilians, including women, volunteered as "aircraft spotters"—people who watched the sky for potential bomb-carrying planes. The military almost immediately realized that they could manage these and other volunteers better if they could place women under military command, train them in standard procedure, and assign them where they were needed.

Thus, on Christmas Eve, Secretary of War Henry Stimson sent Congress a request that it pass Roger's bill. Chief of Staff George Marshall, later a five-star general, soon entered his strong support in the *Congressional Record*, saying, "there are innumerable duties now being performed by soldiers that can actually be done better by women." This sentiment would be reflected in the first recruiting advertisements: one, for example, showed a uniformed WAAC with marching men in the background and said: "Speed them back—Join the WAAC."

Roger's bill won unanimous committee approval in January, but that did not mean there was no opposition on the House floor during debate in March. The *Congressional Record* included complaints such as that by Representative Hoffman of Michigan: "Take women into the armed services ... who then will manage the home fires; who will do the cooking, the washing, the mending, the humble, homey tasks to which every woman has devoted herself?" Congressman Somers of New York decried Roger's bill as:

the silliest piece of legislation ... ever ... A woman's army to defend the United States of America. Think of the humiliation. What has become of the manhood of America, that we have to call on our women to do what has ever been the duty of men? The thing is so revolting to me, to my sense of decency, that I just cannot discuss it.

Few congressmen were as benighted as these, however, and most debate centered not on the authorization itself,



Cleaning the barracks—"Friday Ritual" for WACs stationed at Lowry Field, Colorado, November 1944. *Courtesy of Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

but instead on the details of implementation. Among the valid questions were whether women would be subject to the same military discipline as men; what, if any, their benefits would be; and especially the "auxiliary" status of the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps. The latter did prove to be a huge problem that Congress had to correct later, but Rogers purposefully ignored such glitches to pass the bill. Several congressmen made speeches saying, in effect, that they personally opposed the unprecedented idea, but felt pressured into voting for it because they feared election-time accusations of delaying the war effort. Congresswomen and women's organizations stood firmly together in favor, and the final vote of 249–83 demonstrated Roger's parliamentary skill. Opponents demonstrated their lack of courage with 96 abstentions—more than the number willing to go on record as opposed.

The Senate did not take up the bill until May, and by then the House had moved on to approve the Navy's WAVES. Senate debate on the WAAC was shorter, but not necessarily because more senators approved of the idea; instead, conservatives saw that they already had lost this argument. Unfriendly amendments—on racial segregation, overseas assignments, and a bizarre ban on cremation of WAAC bodies—were defeated, as leadership insisted it was the Senate's duty to the War Department to pass the exact House

bill. Senators only barely agreed: they approved by an 11-vote margin, again with a large number of abstentions. The numbers were 38 in favor and 27 against, with 31 failing to vote on this hot topic.

President Franklin Roosevelt signed the bill three days later, on May 15, 1942, and the Women's Army Auxiliary Corps officially began. Just a week later, the *Christian Science Monitor* reported:

May 22, 1942, will surely go down on the record. It was the day that women joined up with the Army ... From long before dawn..., 440 recruiting stations throughout the nation were struggling to keep pace with avalanche ... unloosed by the call for 540 candidates for officer training.

That avalanche consisted of 13,208 women who applied for these 540 slots—in one day. Although the writer was astonished that married women could enlist without their husbands' permission, her coverage was less sexist than that of most media. Everyone was an expert on the subject of women, and explanations had to be made over and over again to inform an opinionated public on the facts. In this case, for example, a husband's consent not only violated equitable principles (married men did not need their wives' permission to enlist), but also and more important for the practical minds that headed the WAAC, virtually all married women who wanted to enlist were wives of servicemen—and obtaining permission from men all over the world would add unnecessary delay.

The devil repeatedly was in such bureaucratic details, and all of them had to be thought out and adopted into policies that had no American precedent. Most of this devolved onto Director Oveta Culp Hobby, who became the unofficial commander even before the WAAC began. According to official historian Mattie Treadwell, "Mrs. Hobby had, in the summer of 1941, been 'virtually drafted' to Washington, D.C., to set up the new Women's Interests Section of the War Department Bureau of Public Relations." By the time that Representative Roger's bill passed, no one in the War Department was more knowledgeable than Hobby, and it was understood that she would head the new corps whenever it was authorized. Chief of Staff Marshall recognized her abilities: one striking example was when he sent a handwritten note to a general saying, "please utilize Mrs. Hobby as your agent to smooth the way in this matter through Mrs. Roosevelt."

First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, of course, supported this new opportunity for women. Hobby soon had others on board, including journalist and public relations expert Genevieve Forbes Herrick. Within weeks of the bill's passage, personnel at the WAAC headquarters in Washington numbered about fifty, including both military and civilian, women and men. "A fourteen-hour day became standard," Treadwell said, and "even this was often exceeded; staff members reported that for days at a time, Mrs. Hobby and her assistants worked every night until three..., averaging only two or three hours of sleep per night." Within three years, these indefatigable women built a corps from zero to one hundred thousand



members. Some went on to command field units when the WAAC expanded (see names below).

Although she did not work at headquarters, another important early WAAC advisor was Mary McLeod Bethune, president of the National Council of Negro Women. Because Hobby was from Texas, many expected that she would be biased against African-American women—but she proved them wrong. The WAAC, in fact, had a much better record of inclusion than the Army Nurse Corps or any of the naval branches. The same was true of bias against married women: Hobby herself not only was married, but also had two young children.

With so many applicants from which to chose, the first WAAC classes of officer trainees was superbly qualified. Because it took a while to accumulate the credentials they had, their average age was thirty. The women surprised the men who taught initially the classes, as *Ladies Home Journal* quoted a male colonel: master's degrees, he said, were "as common as corporal stripes on this post ... I don't think anybody, anywhere, ever got together any such bunch of women." WAAC member Jane Pollack lamented that her classmates were so intelligent that her 94 percent test average did not merit an A. Margaret Flint, a similar officer candidate, wrote that she "couldn't imagine circumstances under which one would meet ... a more varied assortment of women:"

One is a colored dental surgeon of many years' experience. I have mentioned the judge with whom I played K.P. I've come in contact with several lawyers, many more teachers and nurses, and newspaper women, one of whom has also been a scenario writer in Hollywood. There are scores of librarians, secretaries, clerks, and waitresses ... There are debutantes ... I know two girls who were employed breaking eggs in a dehydrating plant.

She, like all initial WAACs, was based at Fort Des Moines, an underutilized post for cavalry from World War I. The new phenomenon attracted many reporters to Iowa—an unfortunate number of whom were more interested in what women wore than in what they did, and the WAAC uniform received by far the most ink. The biggest concern of new recruits was simply getting something warm to wear when summer turned to autumn, but some reporters even invaded barracks in the hope of glimpsing underwear. Back in Washington, Director Hobby was subjected to endless questions on bras and girdles.

Uniforms, however, proved extremely important, especially as the WAAC began to compete with other services for recruits. A surprisingly large number of women named the uniform as a recruitment factor—but that was when they were choosing between service options, not the initial decision to enlist. That usually was motivated by patriotism, a desire to support democracy, win the war, and bring their men back home. Travel and educational opportunities motivated a lesser number.

Enlistments were high enough that the WAAC soon expanded its training ("boot camp") to Daytona Beach, Florida, and then to Fort Oglethorpe, Georgia. The latter was

the last viable WAAC boot camp, although two others had brief lives. The Fourth Training Center was a section of Fort Devons, Massachusetts, a lovely New England facility that later became the advanced officer school for the top secret Army Security Agency. This fourth basic training camp for opened on March 1, 1943, but according to Army historian Mattie Treadwell lasted only "a hectic six months, during which it had four different Army commandants." She did not explain the reason for its mid-August closing, but the probability is that the cryptologists and other well-educated men stationed at Devons did not want to share space with a boot camp, especially one for women.

The Fifth Training Center, in Treadwell's overly kind words, was "less than desirable." Two facilities in northern Louisiana and one in southern Arkansas had been designated as locations for prisoners of war, but because relatively few POWs had been captured when the WAAC began, some unthoughtful War Department officials decided—over Hobby's objections—that they be used for women. The three were Camps Polk and Ruston, in Louisiana, and Camp Monticello in southern Arkansas, a hundred miles apart. This made the daily routines of boot camps almost impossible, and the impoverished region also was unattractive to the well-qualified women recruited for the WAAC. Among other complaints about the three-location site, the male colonel from Fort Des Moines who tried to make it function reported that "it was necessary to declare the moving-picture theaters of Ruston off-limits until they were cleared of rats." Thus the Fifth Training Center had a mercifully short life: it opened in March of 1943 and closed in June, when enough prisoners of war had arrived from the successful North African campaign.

Georgia's Fort Oglethorpe was the only one of the five boot camps that was commanded by a woman, Elizabeth Strayhorn. In each of these places, training was much like that for male recruits, with marching, classroom work, and strict discipline in every aspect of life from bed-making in the barracks to disposing of one's tray in the mess hall. Commanded by female officers who also had gone through boot camp at Fort Des Moines, WAACs learned to live the military life. From basic training, they went on to dozens of speciality schools all over the county, where they learned the skills that defined their MOS, or military occupational speciality.

Some schools were in army facilities, but many others were conducted in colleges—which had space available because millions of college-age men were in the military. Within a year, speciality schools had taught WAACs the courses for filling 401 of the Army's 625 MOS slots. Some fields were almost completely taken over by women; among them were cryptography, flight simulation, payroll, photography, and teaching: many male cadets learned areas like celestial navigation from female teachers. After speciality school graduation, WAACs were assigned to the Army corps that was most in need of their MOS.

Among the most common were the Medical Corps, the Signal Corps, and the Quartermaster Corps, where they

replaced men who then could be sent to combat. The over two hundred MOS categories from which WAACs were excluded were combat related, with the result that they would not be found in the infantry or ordnance corps. They would, however, be found overseas: unlike the naval branches, Army women were assigned to more than 225 posts all over the world.

The first to go overseas were much-needed telephone operators in North Africa, where Allied forces were driving Germans from westward from Egypt. When WAACs arrived in January 1943, most of the action was in Algeria. *Radio News* later reported that WAACs sat down at switchboards and started to work within hours of arrival, "and the next day were still on the job, without let-up, despite the fact that they took less than an hour to rest." Soon WAACs were assigned around the globe, from Alaska to New Zealand. They especially were vital in the European Theater of Operation, where General Dwight D. Eisenhower repeatedly praised their work. General Douglas MacArthur, who headed the analogous Pacific Theater of Operations, was less enthusiastic, but women eventually proved their worth there, too.

*Radio News*, of course, was forbidden by censorship rules from publishing its story about the hard-working WAACs in North Africa until that battlefield was won. The unfortunate result was that instead of reading about WAAC cryptographers in England and parachute packers in the Pacific, the public got far too many articles with a cute, feminine, dismissive angle. More demeaning were the serious articles from conservatives who opposed this historic change in the status of women; they ran stories that were subtly salacious. In what the Army termed a "slander campaign," these critics reinforced the notion that women were wanted for duty only in kitchens and recreation rooms.

Hobby had been aware of this pitfall from the beginning—and this erroneous perception, in fact, was true of many mid-rank officers until top commanders such as Marshall and Eisenhower got their attention. WAAC leadership worked hard to keep women out of MOS categories such as cooks and bakers, and Hobby took it seriously when civil rights groups complained that too many black women were assigned to them. More difficult than the cooks/bakers perception, though, was the public impression that WAACs were "hostesses" whose job was to entertain troops.

Headline writers were the source for much of this attitude, as a poor image naturally resulted from titles such as *Recreation's* "WAC's Wives are Womanly" and *Newsweek's* "Wacks and Warns in Prospect for Petticoat Army and Navy." Worse was the outright slander of men such as *New York Daily News* columnist John O'Donnell, who falsely wrote that contraceptives would be part of Government Issue (GI) supplies for WAACs. Some religious leaders, too, implied that a Christian woman could not join the military. *Catholic World* and *Christian Century* were among the magazines warning that innocent young women should not be exposed to the moral dangers of life among soldiers. Parents heard such things and discouraged their daughters from joining. Men

in the military—most of whom had yet to meet a WAAC—exchanged rumors and told their sisters, sweethearts, and wives not to enlist.

Recruitment thus began to drop after the big rush at the beginning. The WAAC's acceptance of minority women also hurt its image in the racist society of the time, especially compared with naval branches, which carefully crafted more exclusive elitist images. Enlistment also fell because the auxiliary status that Congress had placed on the WAAC—but not on the naval branches—really did mean that WAACs got lower pay and benefits than the WAVES, SPARS, and Women Marines. By the beginning of 1943, experienced WAACs facing overseas dangers were being paid less than new recruits in other female units.

Congress understood the unfairness of this, and with prodding from WAAC leadership, amended the previous year's authorization act to drop the "auxiliary" status and elevate these Army women to equality with those in the Navy and its affiliates. President Roosevelt signed the bill on July 2, 1943, and the WAAC celebrated its first anniversary by becoming the WAC, or Women's Army Corps. Director Hobby became Lieutenant Colonel Hobby—still a much lower rank than male colleagues with similar assignments.

Although the change from WAAC to WAC had seemed largely technical, it turned out to be very important. Legal experts agreed that WAACs must re-enlist in the new WAC—and a disconcerting number chose not to do so. Almost fifteen thousand of some sixty-five thousand women took this opportunity for honorable discharge, packed up their belongings, and left. The rate varied tremendously by station: at some posts, no one left; at others, half did. Always seeking positive headlines, Hobby held banquets and other ceremonies at places where 95 percent or more of a company re-enlisted.

Explanations from those who departed included some who discovered that they disliked military life or preferred one of the new naval branches or simply personal circumstances. More common was the attraction of better pay and more freedom in defense industry jobs, where they also could make a vital contribution to the war. A disillusioned sense of underutilization probably was the biggest factor. Many male commanders had requested, for example, ten WAACs to replace ten male typists—and then discovered that women did the work twice as fast, leaving well-trained, eager women with nothing to do. It did not mean that they no longer wanted to participate in the war: instead, very often individual women saw that they could make a greater contribution in a different way. Violet Kochendoerfer, for example, dropped out of the WAAC, joined the Red Cross, and worked with European refugees.

Many were akin to her in feeling that their MOS did not match their abilities, or, more commonly, that the military's command structure did not allow them to use their skills. This was especially true in the Medical Corps, where a disproportionate number of WAACs reported that they were ill-treated by other women, the women in the Army Nurse Corps (ANC). All ANC members were officers, and too



WACs, enroute to duty in France, dance on the deck of the LST (Landing ship, tank) to pass the time, 1944. *Courtesy of Women in Military Service For America Memorial Foundation, Inc.*

frequently they overstepped organizational boundaries to, for instance, order a WAAC lab technician to mop a floor. The greatest factor of all was the quality of leadership at a post and especially the opportunity to do meaningful work. At two Texas airfields near each other, for example, one lost thirty-seven WAACs, while the other lost none. Treadwell quoted an analyst who concluded: "The happiest girls are the ones doing the hardest work."

It took the WAC six months to return its previous strength after this distracting transformation, and a large part of the gain was due to the creation of the somewhat faux "Air WACs." The Air Force had not yet separated from the Army and the Navy during World War II, and many people were attracted by the seeming glamour of the relatively new Army Air Corps. Male members of that corps received more public adulation than mere soldiers or sailors, and under the leadership of Betty Bandel, the WAC took advantage of that perception. "Air WACs" actually were no different from other WACs, but assignment to the Army Air Corps offered a positive image that recruiters exploited. As the public came to see that WACs were air traffic controllers and plane mechanics, not cooks and hostesses, enlistment rebounded.

Some departing WAACs cited a lack of respect from male colleagues as their reason for leaving, but the longer the WAC existed, the less potent that factor became. Most men, especially in the lower ranks, gladly accepted individual women—while, in some cases, still objecting to the overall idea of women in the army. Margaret Flint's example perfectly describes that situation. On her first day of duty, a woman overheard a phone conversation between a corporal and his buddy: "Boy, youse ought to see de WAAC I got up here. Geez, is she good lookin'! Don't youse wisht youse was up here?" In later calls, she heard him bragging that his WAAC was a sergeant, outranking both him and his buddy.

Personal feelings such as this often developed between

the Army's men and women—even though, everyone subliminally knew that women were there so that men could risk their lives in combat. Some men understandably resented that, and yet advertising based on that message was the WAC's best recruitment tool. Resentment also reared its head when women—especially the first ones—proved so unexpectedly capable at Army tests and procedures. A *Time* report in 1944, well after the WAC was established, accurately alluded to another unspoken issue: "Old soldiers fear that the busy WACs are on the way to ending forever the enlisted soldiers' time-honored practice of 'gold-bricking.'"

As the WAC expanded to more and more field situations, however, acceptance and even praise usually followed. This was especially true of the first WACs overseas, who went to North Africa as communication specialists with the Signal Corps. About two thousand WACs eventually served there and elsewhere in the Mediterranean. The largest group, more than eight thousand served in the European Theater of Operations, while more than five thousand were assigned to the Pacific Theater.

Some, of course, meet men they wished to marry. Hobby's colleagues in the two nursing corps had greater problems with this, but Hobby also had to spend time on issues of courtship and marriage, especially between officers and enlisted personnel. Bureaucracy eventually had to bend to avoid losing well-training women who wed, and as a result of such progressive thinking, corps strength rose to approximately one hundred thousand women. This was an appreciable success, although far from the one-million members that some planners expected. The clear lesson was that, without the threat of a draft, women were no more likely than men to volunteer.

Indeed, because of expectations of the two genders, it took an exceptionally independent and capable woman to overcome cultural barriers and enlist. That was the kind of



woman who might be rewarded with admission to the Army Command and Staff School at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas. They set the model for the future by establishing a good record at this most prestigious of Army schools, as historian Treadwell explained (in a footnote): "In the first class, a Waac scored fourth in a class of about 400. The best reported Wac record was in a later class: fourth in the General Staff Course..., in a class of over 1,000."

This was the exception, of course, not the rule, and when victory and demobilization came in 1945, many assumed that the WAC and other non-nursing female units would disband—but the question again revolved around the difference between the institution and the individual. While most male officers wanted to shut down the WAC, they also believed that their individual WAC was indispensable. And although most women had joined the WAC to win the war and were ready to return to civilian life, many others wanted to stay. They endured three years of uncertain status before the dilemma finally was resolved with the Women's Armed Services Integration Act of 1948.

Those who wanted to stay had discovered that, annoying though military regulations might be, their very rigidity provided ironic opportunity. With the Army's reliance on written exams, its well-defined MOS categories, and its specifications for promotion and pay, open discrimination became more difficult—and therefore much less prevalent than in the private sector. Private First Class Thelma Giddings, an African American, made this point when she said that she never again would work as a domestic servant. Even before the war in Europe ended, she declared to the *New York Times*: "They're just going to have to kick me out of this Army. Ever since I was a little girl I wanted to be a soldier. The Wac was made to order for me."

*See also:* Adams, Charity; African-American women; Air WACs; Army Nurse Corps; Bandel, Betty; bands, military; Bethune, Mary McLeod; benefits, military; Boyce, Westray Battle; British women; Brown, Mary-Agnes; censorship/secretcy; Civil Air Patrol; Cochran, Jacqueline; colleges; Craighill, Margaret; cryptographers; Davis, Emily; Daytona Beach, Florida; decorations, military; defense industries; demobilization; Des Moines, Fort; diet/dieticians; domestic work; draft; food shortages; enlistment standards; European Theater of Operations; Goodwin, Katherine Ralston; Hallaren, Mary; intelligence, military; Kent, Helen Greene; KP (kitchen police); lawyers; lesbianism; marriage; Military Occupational Speciality (MOS); Marines, Women; magazines; males, comparisons with; Motor Pools; Navy Nurse Corps; North Africa; nurses; occupied Germany; occupied Japan; Pacific Theater of Operations; pay; Pearl Harbor; Quartermaster Corps; rank; recreation; recruitment; refugees; Rogers, Edith Nourse; Russian women; Signal Corps; "slander campaign"; SPARS; teachers; telephone operators/translators; travel; underutilization; uniforms; WAFS; WASP; WAVES; weddings; Wilson,

## Anna; wives of servicemen; Women's Armed Services Integration Act

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## WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL LEAGUE FOR PEACE AND FREEDOM

The Women's International League for Peace and Freedom grew out of activism by Jane Addams, Carrie Chapman Catt, and others in World War I. Although she is known mostly for her pioneering social work at Chicago's Hull House, Addams led some forty women to Europe in 1915, where they met with heads of state and tried to end that war. At the war's end, they formed the WILPF; established a headquarters in Geneva, in traditionally neutral Switzerland; and Addams went on to be the first American woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize. By 1924, the group had more than two dozen chapters in the largest U.S. cities, as well as many thousands of members in other nations.

In the years between the wars, WILPF held well-attended international conferences and worked to create an effective world court, arbitration systems, and other mechanisms that would prevent future violence. Women in France and Germany, however, still lacked the vote; even in Britain, female suffrage initially was limited to "householders" over age thirty. Such women were a mere annoyance to the German, Italian, and Japanese fascists who began World War II.

That war and its genocide was fundamentally different from past European wars, and so the organization emphasized

the "freedom" portion of its goals more than the "peace." Author Catherine Foster, for example, quoted Danish leader Rigmor Risberg Thomsen on the activities of the Copenhagen WILPF chapter:

We couldn't work regularly because we had Gestapo in our office ... The vice-chair was imprisoned at times ... But one month before the German troops arrived, we succeeded in getting three hundred Jewish children out of Vienna ... A few months after the German soldiers came, we had to help most of them escape to [neutral] Sweden. We also helped the Danish Jews to escape once the persecution really set in.

When Japan and Germany declared war on the United States on December 7, 1941, American WILPF leaders held an emergency meeting in Washington, D.C., on December 10. They announced that they accepted Congress' nearly unanimous decision to declare war (the one negative vote came from Representative Jeannette Rankin, who was a WILPF member). Some committed pacifists resigned, but most members declared that they would work with their British branch for the goals of freedom and eventual peace. The press release was drafted by Emily Greene Balch, who later wrote that because of the outrages being committed by fascists, "neutrality in the sense of treating the aggressor and his victim alike is morally impossible." At the war's end, she became the second American woman to win the Nobel Peace Prize.

Instead of peace, the organization concentrated on tolerance, speaking out for the civil rights of African Americans, the modification of immigration laws to assist Jewish refugees, and—with more success—the 1943 repeal of the 1882 Chinese Exclusion Act. WILPF members also intervened on behalf of male conscientious objectors to the draft and Japanese Americans confined to wartime internment camps. Because of its fundamental opposition to conscription, it also opposed the Austin-Wadsworth Bill that would have drafted women for industrial labor.

As the war approached its end, the WILPF focused on the founding of the United Nations. World government was a longtime goal, but many members objected to the details of the proposed UN charter. Author Carrie Foster, for example, quoted a WILPF report that called the structure "far less democratic and frankly more militaristic" than ideal; another leader expressed her shock that there was "no provision for disarmament in the entire draft." Nonetheless, they did what they could to support and improve this vital mechanism for world peace.

WILPF membership, however, never returned to its prewar height. Eleanor Roosevelt had spoken at prewar WILPF events, but most American women involved in the postwar founding of the UN avoided association with it. These women were considered too far left for those who sought official appointments to bodies such as the UN, and that perception grew with the growing conservatism of the 1950s. By its *avant garde* nature, however, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom provides the agenda for universal reform—including the treatment of women as full human

beings, not sexually exploitable victims of war. WILPF's mixture of feminism and pacifism can be seen in its current effort to include rape as a war crime.

*See also:* **African-American women; Austin-Wadsworth Bill; Balch, Emily Greene; draft; Japanese-American women; Jewish women; occupied Europe; postwar; Roosevelt, Eleanor; United Nations; volunteers**

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## WOMEN'S LAND ARMY (WLA)

Like many other things, the United States modeled its version of the Women's Land Army (WLA) on the British agency of the same name. There was, however, a key difference: in the United States, the farm work that the WLA did was entirely voluntary and usually part-time, while in Britain, women were drafted for agricultural labor, as well as for military and industrial needs. Many London women who were assigned to farms—usually under the supervision of men too old for the military—abhorred that work. British farms were not nearly as mechanized as American ones, and the required tasks often were dirty and physically hard. In the United States, no women were forced into farm labor, but the Women's Land Army offered a mechanism for those who chose to serve this way.

Because the worldwide need for food greatly expanded with the war and because many rural men chose to go into the military, farmers faced a labor shortage at the same time that they were expected to harvest bigger crops. A 1944 advertisement in *Better Homes and Gardens* spelled out the problem. Titled “Grow More in '44,” it said:

In the face of the greatest food needs in our history, farm population is at a 20-year low. If you have a few hours,

weeks, or months to work on a farm—this is the year to do it. Anyone with the entire summer free should volunteer NOW. Men and women can get full particulars from their county [agricultural] agent. Boys and girls should see their high school principal ... Those with only a few weeks or a few days should listen for the local [radio] call for emergency volunteers.

This was the third year of such recruitment campaigns. During 1942, the first summer of the war, the shortage of agricultural labor took the nation by surprise. One of the seldom acknowledged factors in this was the internment of Japanese Americans on the West Coast, where they previously had specialized in fruits and vegetables. As their asparagus rotted in the fields and their apricots dropped from unharvested trees, political leaders suddenly saw an aspect of the wartime economy they had not considered. The same was true of Hispanics, especially in California and Texas, many of whom joined the military or found industrial jobs that paid much better than farm work. African Americans who traditionally were sharecroppers on Southern farms also found better pay in defense jobs. In addition, traditional migrant laborers could not get the rationed tires and gasoline to travel to distant fields, and some six million workers quietly dropped out of agricultural work in 1942.

Plants do not procrastinate for human convenience, though, and from early spring peas to autumn squashes, food was lost for lack of harvesting hands. Oregon was the first state to recognize the problem and mobilize its women. During a house-to-house recruitment drive in the summer of 1942, according to sociologist Katherine Glover, “39,150 women enlisted for farm work”—or 60 percent of the state's agriculture workers. Other regions organized similar emergency harvesters, as *Woman's Home Companion* reported:

In ... Kokomo, Indiana, 500 men, women, and children saved the important [tomato] crop ... Fifteen town women and two men ... working double shifts saved an apple crop near Hastings, Minnesota ... Nine members of the Bethel Ladies Aid ... husked 400 bushels of corn ... near Hooper, Nebraska. The Portland Oregon League of Women Voters ... picked beans ... A group of Sumas, Washington, women went out to save the [filbert] nuts.

Already in July of 1942, *Saturday Evening Post* reported that 24 percent of Florida's farm workers were female, while four other states were as high as 20 percent. Because enumerators almost always omit women and children who live on farms and “help out,” these numbers probably were an undercount—but the wartime rise in percentages was real, as the nation's female farm workers jumped from 1 percent to 14 percent in that first year. The California branch of the American Women's Voluntary Services developed an innovative model that would be replicated elsewhere, as *Independent Woman* reported in 1942:

It took the A.W.V.S five months to persuade the farmers that women should be used. Now there are 1,000 women in five camps ... The A.W.V.S. provides a cook and stocks the





Women, with hoe and rake in hand, modeling two types of uniforms worn by the Women's Land Army when planting and harvesting war food crops. *Courtesy of Library of Congress*

commissary. Women pay \$1 a day board and get the regular migratory workers' wages. It's not an easy life: the thermometer may reach 105 in the day and descend to the depths at night. Warm water is rare; cold showers are the rule.

Washington, D.C., bureaucrats were slow to adopt these grass-roots models, but late in the spring of 1943, Congress authorized funds for the Emergency Farm Labor Service under the Department of Agriculture. The act established the United States Crop Corps; the Women's Land Army was part of that, with Florence Hall as its head. Like almost every other wartime agency, the WLA had a uniform, but relatively few women bought it.

Nor did all farmers buy into the program. Many thought that city girls who didn't know a weed from a sprout would be more hindrance than help. Farmers had big investments in crops and animals, as well as in machinery—and if the latter was damaged by ignorant newcomers, replacement parts would be almost unattainable due to wartime metal shortages.

But although they were reluctant to accept help from urban women, many had no choice—and just as male managers in blue-collar industries were surprised to find that women made good employees, so did farmers learn that lesson. The key was that women were doing this work because they wanted to, and so they did it well.

The *New York Times Magazine* explained that “instead of dancing with armed forces on furlough,” some four hundred young women took a ferry up the Hudson to work on upstate farms. Most were college students, but others ranged from debutantes to servicemen's wives to working women giving their vacation time. Many wanted the new experience; some expressed a desire for exercise and fresh air. Most wanted to help with the war in a meaningful way and planned to work at least the thirty days required for a certificate of service in the Women's Land Army. WLA chief Florence Hall wrote of the WLA's variety of volunteers, saying women were “accountants, actresses, artists, bank clerks and tellers, beauticians..., buyers,...dieticians, editors,... musicians, masseuses,...singers, social workers ... and women from many other vocations.”

They did not join for the money. Wages were between \$14 and \$18 a week, about one-third of what women could expect in industrial jobs. Moreover, much of that income would return to the farmer or the sponsoring organization in the form of room and board, which averaged \$10 weekly. *Independent Woman*, the publication of Business & Professional Women, supported the WLA so strongly that it ran numerous articles on it, but even it warned readers not to expect much more than “pin money.” Women nonetheless flocked to this nontraditional work, and in July 1943, the magazine reported:

A Connecticut camp of one hundred and forty girls and women picked the strawberry camp. South of Baltimore ... one hundred women and girls pick beans ... From the Ohio State University, fifty YWCA girls are spending ten weeks on farms ... They are billeted in an old school building ... About one hundred college students are working on Maine farms.

By the next spring, in May 1944, the program was working so well that the magazine put less emphasis on global need and more on the positives for the young woman: “you will be remembering what a good time you had last year, and how, despite sunburn, lame muscles, poison ivy, and other discomforts, you came out of the experience feeling like a million ... [with] new friends and fun.” Indeed, in this last year of the European war, the Agriculture Department planned to place 800,000 adult women via its 6,150 field offices. The high-school Victory Farm Volunteers would add another 1,200,000 workers, half of them girls.

Agricultural professionals also adopted innovations. The University of Maryland, for example, taught women how to dock a lamb's tail and shear a sheep. Farm equipment dealers taught them to drive tractors and operate other machinery, and some state agricultural colleges set up short courses for

women who wanted to make farming their full-time occupation. "Farmerettes" did everything from chopping cotton to pitching hay to peanut shaking.

Countless other women worked in agriculture during the war without affiliating themselves with an organization. *Independent Woman*, which endlessly pushed the WLA, nonetheless acknowledged that the number of women in agriculture had risen prior to the WLA's formation. In the first autumn of the war, it reported that female farm workers had risen from 1 percent to 14 percent during the previous year, with Florida reporting that 24 percent of its farm workers were women. Even this could well have been an undercount because agricultural censuses often miss not only female migrant workers, but also housewives, part-timers, and others who "help out" at crucial times. Few Florida women affiliated themselves with the federal Women's Land Army, but many worked in everything from avocados to zucchini.

The Department of Labor's official publication rather grudgingly acknowledged women's worth, saying they were especially good with farm chores that "demand so much hand labor. Women, however, are deft at this work." Skeptical farmers, too, converted. A Washington State nut grove operator said "he'd never had a better crew," while a Vermont apple grower told *Nation's Business* that "any one of them is worth two ... boys." Even conservative *House and Garden* joined the chorus of praise, concluding that "the Women's Land Army is every bit as official and every bit as important a part of the war as are the other official women's service units."

*See also:* **advertising; African-American women; American Women's Voluntary Services; British women; Business & Professional Women; colleges; conservation; food shortages; Hall, Florence; Hispanic women; Japanese-**

**American women; magazines; males, comparisons with; pay; radio; rationing; recruitment; uniforms; victory gardens; volunteerism; wives of servicemen; YWCA**

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## **YOUNG WOMEN'S CHRISTIAN ASSOCIATION (YWCA)**

The Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) began in London in 1855, as industrialization brought increasing numbers of gullible rural women to the Dickensian city of London, where the YWCA especially tried to protect them from sexual exploitation. It expanded in the United States during the Civil War. Prior to then, American innkeepers often assumed that unescorted women, especially young women, were prostitutes. Because women often had to travel during the Civil War, the YWCA emulated the YMCA (which had preceded the female equivalent in both Britain and America) by providing safe housing.

It established an international headquarters in Geneva in 1894, but briefly was a victim of the internal difficulties that organizations often have as they expand. Indeed, conflict between factions of women grew so serious that according to historian Marion Robinson, the international group went to court in 1904 for an injunction to prevent "the American committee" from establishing a headquarters in Washington, D.C. Eventually the plaintiffs developed into the Travelers Aid Society, while the defendants carried on under the banner of the YWCA. All was settled by the crisis of World War I, and by World War II, the YWCA had decades of experience in the growing field of social work.

Some early YWCA units did not sponsor a housing facility, but instead set the meeting-model that was emulated by the non-secular Girl Scouts. The latter was more likely to recruit girls whose families had lived in America for generations, while the YWCA had more focus on teenage girls in the second-generation of immigrant families. It did much to help these young women through the transition to adulthood, when conflict was to be expected between their

parents' Old World ways and the girls' desire to be young Americans.

The YWCA's understanding of ethnicity was so profound, in fact, that its Portland chapter was one of only two Oregon organizations that took a public stance against the internment of Japanese Americans after World War II began. The national organization followed up by offering some services to inmates after incarceration began despite the women's prescience protest.

As in earlier wars, the YWCA continued to offer safe travel havens to young women during World War II, especially with appreciable expansion into the racially segregated South. These facilities often were in conjunction with colleges for African-American women; Atlanta's Spelman College had the first in 1884. Most YWCA facilities, however, were in or near industrialized Northern cities—but even there, separate buildings were maintained for blacks and whites through the war.

In addition to serving the needs of travelers, YWCA expanded its housing options to include some dormitories near defense factories. Munitions plants were especially likely to be built in rural areas, where finding housing was extremely difficult for young women, and even non-residents could avail themselves of recreation facilities at the local Y. It helped break down social barriers between women of differing backgrounds: at the YWCA residence in Bristol, Tennessee, for example, an Appalachian munitions maker might also learn to play ping-pong.

The YWCA was part of the coalition that began the more secular USO (United Services Organizations) early in 1941, but it never lost its separate identity or its emphasis on women. Indeed, it was the only organization of the USO's six national organizational supporters that focused



on women, and it further expanded its wartime outreach with services to women who were not necessarily young. In Tacoma, Washington, for instance, the YWCA not only assisted servicemen's wives who sought housing, but also established a child care center for defense workers. In San Diego, volunteers kept their information center open day and night. They also created a "room registry" of local residents willing to rent rooms in this overcrowded boom town. The Seattle YWCA also ran a twenty-four-hour help desk.

More than one writer noted that YWCA volunteers welcomed all comers, in contrast to other organizations that focused only on male soldiers. Barbara Klaw, for example, followed her husband to his military training in Neosho, Missouri; she wrote that USO workers were somewhat hostile to servicemen's wives, but YWCA workers "strongly defended, brooded over, and mothered" these young women—who might soon be widows.

Overseas, too, the YWCA had an important presence. Army nurse Barbara Brooks Tomblin recalled the terrible Christmas of 1944, when—during some of the coldest weather on record—Allies were losing the Battle of the Bulge. Many temporary hospitals had retreated to safer ground, but "at the Thirty-ninth," she said, Belgian "townspeople brought ... a gaily trimmed Christmas tree," while "the YWCA presented a pageant and ... did folk dances." The YWCA workers who organized these festivities probably were paid by the American YWCA's National War Fund, which sponsored overseas staff that focused primarily on assisting refugees and prisoners of war who managed to escape from the Nazis.

Although fascist countries suppressed the World YWCA during the war, networks of women nonetheless continued to assist each other. Working with non-Christian refugees and especially Jewish holocaust victims broadened the horizons of YWCA workers, and by the time that victory came, it had transformed into a truly multi-cultural body. Literally mil-

lions of displaced people needed its help at the war's end, and YWCA work expanded exponentially.

Nor did it limit itself to Europe: prewar YWCA chapters existed in China, and, in 1947, the World YWCA began working in occupied Japan. After almost a decade of severed international ties, the international body met in 1947—in Hungary, an example of its organizational mission to reach out to underserved women of many ethnicities. Despite the retention of "Christian" in its name, it long has been open to women of all faiths.

*See also:* **African-American women; camp followers; child care; housing; landladies; Japanese-American women; munitions; prisoners of war; prostitution; recreation; refugees; wives of servicemen; travel; Traveler's Aid; USO**

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## **ZELLER, VERINA (1912–2007)**

The first commander of the postwar Air Force Nurse Corps, Verina Zeller, demonstrated true executive ability in the creation and implementation of a new military corps.

She was born in rural Kansas, and, after graduation from Mount St. Scholastica Academy in Atchison and nurse's training at St. Francis Hospital in Topeka, began her career as a Red Cross nurse in 1934. Western Kansans were suffering from "dust pneumonia," a respiratory disease called by the massive air pollution of the era's "dust bowl" in the drought-stricken Midwest. Her aunt chaired the local Red Cross, and, as Zeller later told the *Topeka Capital-Journal*, her aunt "didn't ask me if I wanted to go. She just said 'you will go.'"

A chance at well-paid private nursing brought her to Fort Riley, Kansas, where the hospital's chief nurse encouraged Zeller to join the Army Nurse Corps (ANC). There was a waiting list for the ANC in this era of the Great Depression, but she was commissioned in 1936 and continued to work at Fort Riley until 1939. Then, she enjoyed life at Manila's Sternberg General Hospital in the Philippines, with her assignment there ending in November 1941—just weeks before Japanese bombs fell on that hospital.

Zeller served most of the war years at March Army Air Field in California, but also moved up the ranks with supervisory experience at hospitals in Connecticut, Long Island, and Walla Walla, Washington. A captain by war's end, she nonetheless underwent strenuous flight-nurse training at age thirty-four. The Army, however, found Zeller more valuable as an administrator than as a flying nurse and sent her for

postgraduate education at New York's prestigious Columbia University.

A major by then, she worked at the Pentagon on the integration of women into the peacetime military. When the Air Force separated from the Army and created its own nursing corps, Zeller was chosen to lead it. Promoted to colonel in 1951, she traveled the globe checking on nurses from Newfoundland to Saudi Arabia—and especially those of the ongoing Korean War. She also spent a great deal of time on recruiting, as the nursing shortage of World War II continued into the Korean War.

Verina Zeller was unusual as a married military woman in that era, having wed Colonel Marco Pettoruto in 1949. She was honored with the Legion of Merit upon retirement. Pettoruto died in 1976, and in 1990, at age seventy-eight, she married Dr. G. Herbert Seberg. She is buried in Paxico, Kansas.

**See also:** Army Nurse Corps; decorations; flight nurses; hospitals; marriage; nurses

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# Index

- Abbott, Grace 310  
 Abell, Pauline 163–64  
 abortion 45, 65, 326, 355, 360,  
**absenteeism** 1–2, 14, 78–79, 121, 147, 149, 166, 208, 224, 286,  
 349, 407, 494  
 Academy Awards 64, 302–03  
 Ackerly, Dorothy 328  
**Adams, Charity** xii, 2, 8, 43, 160, 180, 272, 312, 454  
 Adams, Frank 123, 286, 304  
 Addams, Jane xii, 34, 334, 345, 446, 503  
**adolescence** xii, 3–4, 98, 107–10, 310–11, 429, 449–50, 504  
 Adrian, Nellie 487  
**advertising** xii, 3, 4–7, 35, 51, 53, 73, 81, 87–88, 96–99,  
 174–76, 283, 330, 332, 348, 350, 368, 369, 381–82, 413,  
 431, 461–62, 464, 470, 482, 485, 486, 494, 497, 500  
 AFL-CIO, *see* unions  
*African* 90, 284  
**African-American women**, xii, 1, 2, 8–12, 23, 36, 42–44, 49,  
 52, 65, 78, 90, 108, 135–36, 138, 156, 191, 193, 194, 241,  
 245, 248, 255–56, 260, 265, 284, 302, 311, 322, 333, 348,  
 354, 363, 364, 370, 377–78, 384–85, 387, 396, 429, 430,  
 434, 435, 437, 451, 457, 470, 475, 503, 504, 507  
 defense industries 14, 27, 51, 123–24, 149, 208, 263, 305,  
 310–11, 342, 409, 426, 475–76  
 housing 52, 54, 226, 229, 256, 258, 306, 466, 507  
 military 9, 49, 20, 25, 61, 114, 126–27, 154, 159, 160, 162,  
 169, 180, 211–12, 271, 291, 298, 299–300, 312, 315, 321,  
 343, 360, 367, 380, 384, 414, 419, 424, 426, 481, 499, 502  
 Afro-American Life Insurance Company 42  
 Afro-American Newspapers 103  
 Aerial Nurse Corps 465  
 age discrimination, *see* older women  
 Agnew, Spiro 156  
 Agriculture Department 129, 194, 195, 208, 215, 216, 236, 292,  
 374, 429, 461, 462, 505  
 agricultural/farm women (*see also* Women's Land Army) 3,  
 22, 42, 52, 60–61, 67, 92, 139, 167, 174–77, 190, 194–95,  
 208, 216, 223, 233, 263–64, 313, 342, 360, 376, 377, 384,  
 461–62, 475, 504–06  
**aircraft workers** xii, 10, 11–14, 16, 52–53, 55, 86, 122–23,  
 148–50, 169, 207, 342, 398, 444  
 Air Force (postwar) xii, 29, 49, 94, 169, 213, 509  
 Ainsworth, Ellen 119  
 airplane spotters 83, 87–88, 90, 92, 313, 413, 465, 497  
**Air WACs** 8, 14, 15–16, 34–35, 85, 114, 120, 169, 300, 318,  
 319, 328, 382, 414, 501  
 Air Transport Authority (British) 61, 92, 157, 177, 276, 468,  
 476, 497  
 Air Transport Command 11, 34–35, 277, 318  
 Akaji, Lilly Kazuko 238  
 Akiyama, Itsu 236, 237  
 Alabama 10, 30, 49, 52, 79, 245, 304, 347, 382, 396, 407, 409,  
 429, 457  
**Alaskan women/Alaska** xii, 16–18, 71, 119, 166, 233, 236, 300,  
 313, 358–59, 419, 438, 442, 443  
 alcohol 5, 87, 176, 180, 287, 337, 339, 340, 358, 395, 414, 432,  
 453, 455, 456  
 Alexander, Shirley 22  
**All-American Girls Professional Baseball League** 18–19, 380  
 Allen, Gracie, and George Burns 370  
 Allen, Florence 201, 245  
**allotments** xii, 19–20, 40, 79, 132, 262, 296, 327, 343, 388, 493,  
 497,  
 Amalgamated Clothing Workers 40, 441, 446  
 ambulance workers 21, 60, 90, 130, 199, 249, 303, 386–87,  
 408  
 America First, *see* opposition to the war  
 American Association of University Women (AAUW) 66, 187,  
 246, 323, 448, 495  
 American Friends Service Committee, *see* Quakers  
*American Home* 71, 78, 138, 225, 284, 491  
 American Home Economics Association 130, 215  
*American Journal of Nursing* 21, 25, 284, 358, 360  
 American Legion/American Legion Auxiliary 30, 128, 465, 475  
*American Magazine* 49, 90, 127, 159, 283, 304, 317, 324, 384,  
 404, 426, 492  
*American Mercury* 94, 283, 312  
**American Nurses Association (ANA)** 20–21, 45, 154, 173,  
 220, 282, 322, 386, 387  
 American Red Cross, *see* Red Cross  
 American Relief Society 443, 465  
 American Toy Institute 260  
 American Women's Medical Association 37  
**American Women's Voluntary Services (AWVS)** 21–23, 50,  
 85, 99, 157, 301, 380, 385, 386, 387, 443, 448, 465, 504–05  
 Amidon, Beulah 78  
 Anderson, Clinton 374, 376  
**Anderson, Elda Emma** 23, 289, 290  
 Anderson, Margaret 131  
**Anderson, Mary** 9, 23, 66, 134, 135, 202, 256, 264, 310, 342,  
 346, 351, 352, 385, 396, 409, 445  
 Andrews Sisters 307, 308  
 Angel, Joan 482  
*Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*  
 284  
 Antheil, George 257–58  
 Anthony, Susan B. 280  
 Anthony, Susan B. II xii, 1, 54, 59, 148, 167, 226, 255, 260, 306,  
 383, 407, 440, 465, 475  
 Anzio, Battle of 24, 46, 119, 167, 376  
 APO, *see* letter writing  
 Aquino, Filipe 433  
 Archer, Bernice 357, 359  
*Architectural Record* 53, 80, 192, 225, 284  
 Arizona 10, 24, 71, 34, 132, 189, 236, 258, 260, 267, 279, 312,  
 316, 479



## INDEX

- Arkansas 10, 32, 36, 52, 71–72, 107, 124, 126, 132, 173, 183, 235–36, 247, 271, 301, 304, 315, 333, 347, 380, 429, 482, 487, 499
- Arlington National Cemetery xi, 47, 64, 173, 198, 214, 219, 292, 293
- Army Air Corps, *see* Air WACs
- Army Corps of Engineers 17, 220, 292, 333, 372, 404, 457
- Army Nurse* 26, 46
- Army Nurse Corps (ANC)** xii, 8, 17, 20, **24–27**, 68, 69, 107, 118–119, 130, 165, 169, 211, 217, 269, 282, 294, 302, 312, 314, 323, 346, 347, 358, 384, 405, 413, 433, 434, 441, 458, 494, 496, 497, 500
- benefits/pay/rank 41, 153, 321, 343–44, 37–71
- leadership 45–47, 49–50, 172–73, 509
- overseas 37–39, 46, 61, 86, 100–02, 116–18, 152, 157–64, 168–69, 201, 213–14, 226, 239–41, 273, 316–18, 325–26, 327, 328, 336, 337, 357, 360, 380, 381, 392, 435, 443, 453, 455, 457, 480, 486
- Arendt, Hannah 391
- Arnold, Alison 455
- Arnold, H.H. “Hap” 31, 93, 114, 277, 476, 478–79
- Arnold, Laurence 235
- artists** xii, 13, **27–29**, 312, 332, 396, 399, 471
- Ashford, Julia Larm 86
- Asia Magazine* 64
- Associated Press (AP) 104, 106, 151, 159, 162, 180, 204, 392
- Association for Women in Communication 190
- Association of Army and Navy Wives** 29
- Asson, Elma 119
- Atlantic Monthly* 184, 190, 263, 264, 283, 351, 488
- Austin-Wadsworth Bill** xii, 20, **29–31**, 125, 139, 146, 156, 287, 346, 383, 425, 465, 475, 503
- Austin, Warren 30, 139
- Australia 25, 26, 75, 97, 157, 166, 172, 214, 315, 336, 337, 380, 383, 390, 392, 457, 462, 472, 497
- Auxiliary Territorial Service (British) 61, 425, 497
- Avenger Field** 31–32, 92–93, 177, 277, 476–77
- Avery, Marjorie “Dot” 104, 105, 162
- Aviation* 1, 284
- aviators, civilian** 32, 89, 92, 177, 197, 201, 207, 274–75, 276, 333, 424, 468–69, 476, 477
- AWOL (absent without leave) 196, 287, 293, 388
- Axis Sally** 32–33, 231, 296, 369, 432
- Ayling, Keith 22, 62, 92, 98, 99, 130, 230, 449, 465
- Aynes, Edith 26, 46, 119, 165, 211, 220, 221, 321, 441, 442
- Baber, Ray E. 4
- Babinetz, Marjory Linheart 15, 120
- baby boom (*see also* birth control/birth rate) 44, 135, 255, 280, 350, 356, 495
- Bacon, Edmund 259
- Bacon, Mrs. William 29
- Baden-Powell, Lord Robert 251
- Baer, Mary Cunningham 362
- Bailey, Ronald 357
- Baker, Mary Lou 356, 493
- Balch, Emily Greene** xii, **34**, 121, 280, 354, 446, 503
- Baldwin, Joseph C. 30
- Baldwin, Nona 77, 78, 429, 476
- Baldwin, Mrs. Harris 475
- Bandel, Betty** 6, 8, 15, **34–35**, 57, 114, 189, 274, 468, 501
- bands, military** 35–36, 127, 307, 309, 380, 382
- Banker, Grace 410
- Bankhead, Talulah 140
- Banks, Barbara 364
- Banning, Beatrice 28
- Banning, Margaret Culkin 280, 351, 465
- Barber, Judy 105
- Barnard College 136, 186, 187, 190, 195, 201, 248, 297, 329
- Barnes, Mary 158
- Barnes, Pacho 32
- Barringer, Emily Dunning** 36, 347
- Barron, Betsey 218
- Bartholomew, Margaret 89
- Bartlett, Helen Blair 289
- Barton, Betsey 284
- Barton, Clara 24, 385–86, 388
- Barton, Edythe 166
- Barton, Hazel Johnson 221
- Bascom, Florence 182
- Bataun** 24, **37–39**, 45, 100, 157, 167, 208, 213–14, 221, 283, 302, 315, 316, 327, 332, 336, 357, 371, 385, 441, 455, 479, 486
- Bates, Katherine Lee 308
- Battle of the Bulge 56, 104, 105, 162, 167, 180, 184, 221, 508
- BBC (British Broadcasting Company) 104, 159, 370
- Beach, Sylvia 179
- Bean, Acsha 347
- Beard, Mary Ritter 279
- Beauvior, Simone de 252
- Beech, Olive Ann 13, 207, 276
- Beecher, Catharine 215
- Beever, Antony 325
- Bell, Evangeline 118, 420–21
- Bellafaire, Judith xi, 101, 201, 270, 344, 418
- Bellanca, Dorothy Jacobs 40, 243, 475
- Belmont, Alva Vanderbilt 199, 277
- Benatitus, Ann 119, 315
- Bendix Corporation 145
- Benedict, Ruth** 11, **40**, 42, 328, 332
- benefits** 18–19, **40–41**, 132, 262, 334, 388, 479, 489, 493, 495, 500
- Benjamin, Louise Paine 190, 284, 352
- Berger, Elsie 455
- Bergman, Ingrid 302, 355
- Berlin, Irving 308
- Bernstein, Alison 312, 313
- Besley, Laura 167
- bestsellers/books by women** xii, **41–42**, 331, 332, 384
- Bethune, Mary McLeod** 9, 36, **42–44**, 116, 203, 208, 211, 256, 310–11, 385, 396, 447, 499
- Bettencourt, Sylvia de 103, 208
- Better Homes and Gardens* 504
- B.F. Goodrich Company 58, 147
- Biber, Barbara 82
- Biddle, Nicholas 235
- Biggers, Maxine 36
- Biggerstaff, Camilla Mills 422
- Birdwell, Russell 60, 277, 465, 468
- birth control/birth rate** xii, **44–45**, 223, 253, 255, 295, 314, 318, 350, 355, 414, 415, 457–58, 472, 493
- blackouts 59, 90, 97, 100, 160, 201, 223
- Blackwell, Elizabeth 37, 100
- Blair, Emily Nervell 284
- Blanchfield, Florence** 25, **45–47**, 49, 113, 120, 175, 241, 321, 358, 370
- Blatch, Harriot Stanton 279
- Bliss, Mildred Barnes 447
- Blood, Kathryn 10, 124, 305
- Blough, Phyllis 71
- Blue, Edna 81
- Blue Star Mothers of America/Blue Stars** 47, 138, 188, 447
- Bochner, Frances 298
- Boeing Aircraft 12, 13, 122, 148, 313

- Bok, Edward 190  
 Boles, Antoinette 429  
 Boll, Eleanor S. 3, 4, 81  
**Bolton Act** 24, **47–48**, 69, 113, 220, 321, 322, 323, 342, 347  
**Bolton, Frances** 20, 25, 48, **48–50**, 69, 72, 113, 121, 137, 156, 180, 181, 186, 278, 279, 320, 324, 396, 448, 495  
 Bombeck, Erma 189  
**bond sales** 11, 18, 22, 35–36, **50–51**, 81, 91, 101, 177, 229, 241, 312, 313, 332, 349, 399, 429, 464, 467  
**Bonney, Therese** **51–52**, 103, 121, 181  
 Booker, Edna Lee 253  
 Boom, Kathleen 276, 289, 367, 382, 425  
**boom towns/population movement** xii, 4, 5, **52–55**, 70–71, 191–93, 224–27, 256, 258, 306, 433–36, 437, 449, 451, 491  
 Boschner, Lillian 298  
 Boston, *see* Massachusetts  
*Boston Globe* 104, 117, 161, 169  
*Boston Herald* 104  
 Boulanger, Nadia 307  
**Bourke-White, Margaret** xii, 10, 27, 33, **55–56**, 90, 103, 119, 124, 163, 176, 181, 250, 261, 283, 325, 400, 439  
 Bousfield, Madelle 475  
 Bowen, Catherine Drinker 42  
 Bowles, Chester 229, 331  
 Bowman, Henry 295, 450, 485  
**Boyce, Westray Battle** **56–58**, 197, 198, 495–96  
 Boyer, Helen King 28  
 Braddock, Ruth Fenner 299  
 Bradley, LaVerne 10, 13, 283, 305, 409, 417  
 Bradley, Omar 63, 411, 496  
 Brandt, Allan 457  
 Brannon, Jane Steele 327  
 Brantley, Hattie 357  
 Braun, Eva 152  
**Breckinridge, Mary Marvin** **58–59**, 104, 205, 250, 369  
 Bright, Cooper B. 201  
 Brinkley, David 125  
**British women/Britain** xii, 6, 12, 20, 21, **59–63**, 66, 80, 81, 125, 130, 144, 150, 157, 159, 166, 168, 179, 194, 209, 230, 279, 302, 307, 333, 347, 357, 378, 390, 393, 400, 407, 443, 453, 457, 463, 465, 466, 472, 473, 475, 497, 504, 507  
   American women in, 3–8, 60–62, 75, 108, 112, 117, 120, 146, 158–59, 166, 177, 195, 196, 205, 220, 249–50, 276, 281–82, 314, 317, 345, 347, 372, 379, 386, 387, 415, 448–49, 476, 490  
 Brohinsky, Rose 166  
 Brokaw, Tom 197  
 Bromley, Dorothy Dunbar 90  
 Brooks, Overton 371  
 Brooks, Sara 409  
*Brown American* 194, 284, 384, 470  
 Brown, Cecil 353  
**Brown, Mary-Agnes** **63–64**, 66, 328, 338, 460  
 Brown, Prentiss 98, 210, 229, 330, 377  
 Browne, Lewis 295  
 Bruce, David 180  
 Bryan, George S. 298  
 Bryan, William Jennings 155  
 Bryn Mawr College 182, 183, 424  
**Bubley, Esther** 27, **64**, 261  
**Buck, Pearl** 41, 42, **64–65**, 86, 267, 332, 415, 421, 439, 474  
 Buell, Marjorie Henderson 42  
 Bugbee, Sylvia 57  
 Buhler, Charlotte 364, 391  
**Bundles for Britain** **65–66**, 349, 385, 465  
 Burgess, Ernest 132, 355, 457  
 Burns, Prudence 322  
 Burova, Olga 350  
**Business & Professional Women (BPW)** 48, 63, **66–67**, 78, 92, 179, 194, 203–04, 245, 256, 262, 264, 266, 285, 323, 347, 352, 384, 396, 430, 448, 460, 466, 475, 476  
*Business Week* 29, 44, 71, 79, 80, 124, 146, 147, 229, 264, 284, 342, 352, 355, 363, 373, 374, 377, 383, 405, 409, 413, 442, 445, 482, 494  
 Cable Act 155  
 Cabot, Henry D. 30  
 CBI (China–Burma–India Theater of Operations) 16, 56, 84, 103, 104, 110, 120, 170–73, 221, 294, 295, 381, 388, 392, 420, 421, 455, 457  
 CBS (Columbia Broadcasting System) 58–59, 104, 332, 369  
**Cadet Nurse Corps** xii, 48, **68–69**, 86, 220, 238, 308, 323, 349, 466  
 Caldwell, Erskine 55  
 Caldwell, Taylor 42  
 California 5, 14, 52, 53, 71, 80, 113, 114, 134, 148, 151, 166, 172, 205, 234–38, 259, 277, 289, 293, 316, 399, 403, 407, 412, 414, 438, 484, 485, 504, 509  
   Los Angeles 11, 14, 21, 36, 52, 79, 85, 86, 119, 122, 137, 146, 167, 207, 208, 233, 242, 267, 334, 343, 380, 429, 432, 451  
   San Diego 14, 54, 55, 315, 488, 508  
   San Francisco 22, 52, 71, 85, 101, 187, 209, 234, 235, 246–47, 261, 271, 291, 296, 315, 362, 365, 386, 402, 418, 423, 432, 434, 442, 447–48, 450, 453, 475, 482  
 Calkins, Mary 364  
**camp followers** (*see also* wives of servicemen) xii, **69–71**, 225–26, 258, 356, 368, 430, 434, 437, 450, 489, 490  
 Camp, LaVonne Telshaw 337, 388  
 Campbell, D'Ann 387, 409  
 Canada/Canadians 29, 59, 61, 92, 104, 159, 177, 198, 276, 357, 358, 390, 411, 425, 462, 468, 476, 497  
 Cannon Textiles 5, 97  
 Capra, Frank 302, 303  
**Caraway, Hattie Wyatt** **71–72**, 156, 186, 320, 417  
 Carr, Lorraine 357  
 Carraway, Maudie 119  
 Carpenter, Iris 104, 117, 160, 162  
 Carpenter, Maria 313  
 Carson, Lee 104, 105, 117, 161, 162  
 Carson, Rachel 332  
 Carson, Ralph 109–10  
 Carter, Jimmy 156, 459  
 Carter, "Mother" Maybelle 307  
 Carter, Rosalyn 156  
 Cassetta, Gertrude Pearson 116, 117, 118, 180  
 Cassidy, Aloha H. 484  
 Cates, Teresa 357  
*Catholic Home* 78  
 Catholic women/Catholic church 33, 127, 131, 141, 270, 279, 302, 318, 319, 389, 413, 415, 444, 447, 449, 458, 486, 488  
*Catholic World* 30, 283, 500  
 Catt, Carrie Chapman 120, 188, 266, 503  
 Celler, Emanuel 347  
**censorship/secretcy** xii, 56, 58, **73–75**, 84, 107, 161, 169, 230–31, 237, 272, 288–90, 299, 302, 317, 331, 337, 349, 369, 403, 409, 410–12, 420–22, 435, 464, 477, 480  
 Cerasale, Ethel Carson 161  
 Cessna Aircraft 13  
 Chamberlain-Kahn Act 361, 456  
 Chamberlain, Neville 249  
 Champlin, Jane 479  
 Chapelle, Georgette Meyer, *see* Dickey Meyer  
 chaplains/clergy 39, 62, 237, 295, 299, 331, 359, 413, 449, 455, 472, 483

## INDEX

- Chase, Mary 42, 140  
 Chennault, Claire L. 76  
 Cher 303  
 Chiang Kai-shek 76–77, 84, 183, 266, 267, 411, 415, 422  
**Chiang, Madame Kai-shek ( Soong Mai-ling) 75–77**, 86, 183, 208, 253, 268, 278, 388  
 Chicago, *see* Illinois  
*Chicago Daily News* 104, 181, 249  
*Chicago Defender* 43, 385  
*Chicago Times* 196  
*Chicago Tribune* 75, 103, 136, 157, 253, 334, 439, 447, 448  
**child care** xi, 1, 10, 14, **77–80**, 190, 216, 26–61, 319, 320, 383, 400, 407, 429, 432, 440, 466, 476  
**children/motherhood** (*see also* adolescence) xii, **80–83**  
     American 18–19, 30, 32, 98, 138, 153–54, 175, 211, 225, 267, 273, 296, 310, 314, 334, 346, 349–50, 355–56, 365, 369, 395, 397, 429, 434, 437, 476, 488, 489, 492  
     overseas 29, 40, 80, 174, 325, 328, 357–60, 389–90, 391, 392, 473–74  
**Child, Julia 77, 83–85**, 231, 332, 420  
 China 39, 62, 64–65, 75–77, 84, 104, 173, 176, 253–54, 266–67, 279, 328, 334, 336, 344, 350, 357, 378, 388, 391, 392, 415–16, 421, 422, 447, 479, 508  
**Chinese-American women 22, 84–86**, 234, 241, 266–67, 289, 312, 316, 421, 447, 479, 503  
 Chou En-lai 415  
 Christmas 7, 37, 60, 71, 74, 93, 99, 100, 160, 162, 180, 188, 213, 240, 259, 266, 272, 273, 302, 317, 332, 337, 357, 374, 386, 479, 497, 508  
*Christian Century* 31, 61, 78, 176, 283, 351, 378, 500  
*Christian Science Monitor* 279, 281, 283, 439, 498  
 church attendance 14, 31, 109, 233, 240, 380, 413, 453, 456, 486  
 Church, Peggy Pond 289  
 Churchill, Winston 29, 59, 249, 411  
 Churchill, Mrs. Winston 65  
**cigarettes 5, 87–88**, 99, 122, 195, 220, 305, 339, 376, 386, 420, 426, 435  
 Citizens Committee for a National War Service Act 30  
 Citron, Minna Wright 28  
**Civil Air Patrol 32, 88–90**, 177, 424, 438, 443, 466, 468  
**civil defense 21, 48, 83, 88, 90–92**, 223, 321, 332, 386, 443, 465  
 civil service examinations – *see* tests  
 Civil War 8, 11, 24, 130, 137, 174, 193, 201, 215, 230, 346, 410, 420, 433, 489, 507  
 Clark, Evans 249  
 Clark, Gurthalee 36  
 Clark, Ida Coker 11  
 Clark, Mark 120, 121, 318  
 Clark, Septima Poinsette 2  
 Clarke, Alice 392  
 Clarke, Susan P. 479  
 Clawson, Augusta 444  
 Clay, Vera 126, 251, 297  
 Clearwater, Helena 119  
*Cleveland Plain Dealer* 106  
 Clinton, Bill 271  
 Close, Nell 321  
 “clubmobile,” *see* Red Cross  
**Cochran, Jacqueline 25, 31–32, 92–93**, 120, 177, 207, 276, 282, 371, 424, 438, 469, 476–79, 497  
 Coen, Eleanor 28  
 Colbert, Claudette 302  
 Coleman, Bessie 32  
**colleges** (*see also* specific names) **94–96**, 138, 153–154, 155, 185–86, 194, 263, 266, 285, 297, 310, 311, 320, 352, 364, 380–81, 418, 440, 459, 492–93, 505  
 Collier, John 313  
*Collier's* 22, 52, 55, 76, 82, 100, 101, 105, 106, 116, 117, 132, 159, 178, 179, 180, 183, 184, 241, 283, 318, 372, 400, 434, 482, 485  
 Collingwood, Charles 250  
 Colman, Penny 107, 135, 255, 263, 426, 470  
 Colorado 99, 146, 208, 210, 236, 237, 304, 315, 412, 475, 496, 498  
 Columbia University 33, 40, 56, 172, 186, 190, 205, 231, 260, 261, 288, 289, 345, 358, 423, 437, 509  
 “comfort women” 76, 101, 362  
*Commonweal* 283, 413  
 Communication Workers of America 144, 431  
 computers (*see also* electronics industry) 19, 112, 218–19, 231, 247, 257, 300, 402, 403  
 concentration camps 27, 56, 104–106, 163, 174, 178, 181, 184, 205, 242, 267, 303, 325, 389, 447, 455  
 Congress 9, 12, 16, 19, 20, 29–31, 40, 47, 69, 85, 93, 137–38, 150, 154, 155–57, 202, 238, 264, 287, 294, 310, 311, 315, 323–24, 330, 342, 349, 352, 371, 389, 426, 439, 456, 472, 473, 479, 495–96, 497–98  
*Congressional Record* 21, 31, 37, 48, 50, 111, 282, 371, 394, 497  
 congresswomen 48–50, 69, 71–72, 93, 136–37, 156, 186, 246–47, 278–79, 318–19, 342, 371, 387, 393–94, 396, 416–17, 478, 480, 496  
 Connecticut 2, 37, 110–11, 123, 190, 304, 383, 407, 417–18, 423, 453, 505, 509  
**conservation 4–7, 81, 90, 91, 96–99**, 141–43, 174–77, 223–24, 332, 348, 376, 467, 504–05  
 Consolidated Aircraft 14, 141, 147, 286, 444  
 Cook, Betty 119  
 Cooper, Page 391  
 Cooper, Signe Skott 455  
 Copeland, Aaron 307  
 Corcoran Gallery 28  
 Cori, Gerty Radnitz 404, 440  
 Cormier, Lucia 416  
 Cornell University 37, 55  
**Corregidor 24, 38, 39, 100–02**, 157, 208, 214, 221, 337, 357, 455  
*Correio de Manha* 103, 208  
**correspondents, war** xii, 51–52, 56, 60, 64, 75, **103–07**, 116–18, 205, 206, 231, 249–50, 253–54, 282, 319, 325, 357, 392, 415, 436  
 Costello, John 457  
 Costello, Dorothy Pat 120  
 Coster, Ruth 87, 301, 338, 455  
 Council of State Governments 235  
 Council on America's Military Past xi  
**courtship/dating** xii, 3, 44, 74, 94–95, **107–10**, 133, 138, 275–76, 295–96, 314, 315, 318, 327, 338, 349, 365, 372, 379, 382, 395, 406, 414, 449–50, 471, 485, 489, 501  
 Cowan, Ruth Baldwin 104, 160, 162, 180  
 Coyne, Catherine 104, 162  
**Craighill, Margaret 110–11**, 364, 457  
 Crawford, Joan 302  
 Creed, Virginia 154, 482  
 Creel, Mary 172  
 Crissman, Mary 42  
 Cronkite, Walter 58  
 Crop Corps, *see* Agriculture Department  
 Crosby, Bing 97  
 Crost, Lyn 106, 325  
**cryptographers** xii, 74, **111–12**, 230–31, 247, 299, 312, 338, 368, 402, 412, 413, 490  
 Cubar, John 108  
 Cullen, Kay 167  
 curfews 4, 109, 201, 318, 361, 362, 380, 456



- Curie, Marie 289  
*Current Biography* 248, 252  
*Current History* 99, 132, 283, 353, 377, 442  
Curtis, Carl 235  
Curtis, Catherine 334  
Curtis, Louisa and Cyrus 190  
Curtner, Marjorie Ann 292
- Dailey, Lillian O'Malley 291  
Dallas/Forth Worth, *see* Texas  
Dandouweris, Mary 380, 455  
Daniel, Jere 295  
Daniels, Roger 234, 238  
Danner, Dorothy Still 316, 359  
Danzinger, Juliet 82  
**Dauser, Sue 113–14**, 119, 120, 173, 315, 371  
Davis, Bette 140  
Davis, Dorothy and Eva 358, 392  
Davis, Elmer 332  
**Davis, Emily Claire 8**, **114–15**, 189, 196, 496  
**Davis, Fanny-Fern 115**, 147, 402  
Davis, Kent 296  
Davis, Margie L. 479  
Davidson, Margaret 99, 376  
Davidson, Maude 101  
Dawidowicz, Lucy 244, 392  
Day, Steven 136  
**Daytona Beach, Florida 43**, **115–16**, 127, 414, 424, 499  
**D-Day** xii, 26, 49, 60, 105, 106, **116–118**, 120, 160, 161, 168, 196, 219, 250, 272, 314, 334  
DeBeers Diamonds 486  
**decorations/honors** 11, 26, 35, 39, 45, 47, 50, 57, 86, 94, 101, 114, 117, **118–121**, 134, 165, 167, 170, 169, 178, 183, 187, 189, 200, 241, 272, 279, 282, 289, 306, 313, 314–15, 318, 322, 346, 393, 415, 417, 471  
from foreign nations 51–52, 121, 181, 196, 250, 253, 416  
from US military:  
Air Medal 120, 277  
Bronze Star 117, 119, 197, 120, 318, 358, 421, 461  
Congressional Medal of Honor 118, 208  
Distinguished Flying Cross 120, 247  
Distinguished Service Medal 93, 120, 196, 213, 219, 305, 315, 410  
Legion of Merit 64, 93, 97, 111, 119, 189, 198, 315, 316, 397, 423, 425, 509  
Purple Heart 118, 214, 316, 344, 438  
Silver Star 119  
**defense industries** (*see also* aircraft workers, boom towns, electronic industry, employers/employment changes, labor force, munitions, shipbuilding) xii, 1–2, 4, 9, 10, 78–79, 121, **122–25**, 141, 146–50, 208, 255–56, 260–61, 304–06, 308, 312, 342–43, 348–49, 355, 356, 376, 380, 383, 405, 406–10, 433, 444, 445–46, 445, 451, 470, 475–76, 494  
de Gaulle, Charles 178, 250  
Delaware 92, 277, 407, 468  
DeLay, Roy 253  
DeMar, George 10  
de Mille, Agnes 307  
**demobilization** 46, 47, **125–27**, 185–86, 198, 219, 328, 412, 419, 457, 459–60, 473, 479, 495–96, 502  
Democratic Party/Democrats 29–30, 48, 63, 71–72, 129–30, 136, 156, 186, 199, 243, 278, 345, 347, 387, 393–94, 396, 399, 416, 446, 448  
demographic/numerical data 43–44, 52–55, 151, 200, 209, 212, 224, 220, 224, 233, 242, 244, 255–56, 263–65, 290, 304, 312, 313, 349, 356, 357, 364–65, 371, 382, 383, 386, 388, 389, 390, 400–01, 406, 411, 440, 445, 458, 462, 472, 476, 478, 484, 495, 504, 506
- Dench, Judith 303  
Dennett, Mary Ware 44  
**Des Moines, Fort 2**, 3, 8, 34, 115, **127–29**, 196, 211, 226, 251, 287, 366, 367, 413, 424, 435, 459, 499  
Detroit, *see* Michigan  
*Detroit Free Press* 104, 162  
Detzer, Dorothy 448  
Deutsch, Helene 364, 391  
de Varona, Frank 207  
Dew, Gwen 357  
Dewey, John 364  
Dewey, Thomas 278  
**Dewson, Molly 129–30**, 156, 204, 345, 396  
DeWitt, J. L. 234, 238  
Diamond, Hanna 326  
*Diary of Anne Frank* 140  
Dickey, Carroll 359  
Dickinson, Anna 76  
Dies, Martin 249  
**dieticians** 80, 87, **130–31**, 216, 299, 331, 347, 402  
Dilling, Elizabeth 334  
Dinney, Dita H. 24  
displaced persons, *see* refugees  
Disney, Walt 302, 477  
**divorce** xii, 43, 55, 62, 65, 76, 105, 110, 129, **131–33**, 168, 183, 184, 399, 202, 261, 262, 278, 353, 355, 394, 432, 471, 473  
Dix, Dorethea 24  
Dixon, Madeline 82  
Dock, Lavinia 20  
Dodge, Grace Hoadley 436  
**Dogs for Defense** 121, **133–34**, 299, 385, 443, 465  
Doherty, Thomas 303  
Dolan, Jeanne Doll 172  
**domestic workers** 9, 23, 98, **134–36**, 160, 210, 214, 216, 223, 233, 256, 263, 297, 342, 358, 375, 396, 409, 465, 492, 502  
Donovan, Eileen 329  
Donovan, William “Wild Bill” 121, 196, 332, 420  
Dormer, Sir Cecil 199  
Douglas Aircraft 12, 13, 148, 312  
**Douglas, Emily Taft xi**, **136**, 334, 448  
**Douglas, Helen Gahagan 49**, 135, **136–37**, 278, 396, 448  
Dovi, Lu 488  
**draft** 3, 16, 18, 20, 23, 29–31, 49, 60, 66, 71, 113, **137–39**, 156, 168, 208, 235, 262, 285, 287, 294, 295, 312, 315, 322, 323–24, 333–34, 371, 400, 475, 496, 501, 504  
**drama** xii, **139–40**, 186, 278, 332  
**dress** (*see also* uniforms) xii, 5, 97, 136–37, **140–43**, 216, 222, 240, 243, 300, 305, 317, 330, 337, 372, 373, 376, 399, 402, 405, 408, 409, 414, 427, 435, 459, 477, 486, 494, 499  
Dries, Ione 166, 300  
Driftmier, Leanna 370  
Druks, Herbert 390  
Dubendorfer, Rachel 420  
DuBois, Cora 422  
Duerk, Alene 74, 113, 219, 221, 316, 328, 339–40, 455  
Duhme, Ruth 384  
Dulles, Eleanor 422  
Dulles, John Foster 187, 422  
DuMaurier, Daphne 42  
Dunbar, Sadie Orr 475  
DuPont Chemical 80, 147, 201, 304, 402  
Dussaq, Katherine 479
- Eaker, Ira 318  
Earhart, Amelia 32, 88, 89, 207, 310, 438  
Earley, Charity, *see* Adams, Charity  
Ebbert, Jean, and Marie-Beth Hall 187, 416, 480  
Ebsary, Rosa 472

## INDEX

- Eckert, Bertha 313  
 Edie, Mildred 373  
*Education for Victory* 69, 80, 153, 284, 418, 429, 481  
 Edwards, Esther 163  
 Edwards, Jonathan 41  
 Edwards, Julia 77, 103, 107, 160, 161, 206, 249–50, 253  
 Edwards, Marjorie D. 479  
 Edwards, Rebecca 479  
 Ehama, Sayo 237  
 Eicher, Edward C. 334  
 Einstein, Albert 23, 289, 390  
 Eisenhower, Dwight David 35, 50, 62, 103, 108, 114, 120, 161, 169, 187, 196, 197, 202, 212, 213, 230, 250, 279, 294, 317, 318, 372, 397, 399, 410, 420, 490, 496, 500  
**electronics industry** xii, 111–12, 13, **144–46**, 218–19, 230, 263, 403, 410, 418, 426, 463–64, 481  
 Elleman, Bruce 359  
 Ellis, Mrs. Floyd 454  
 Emergency Committee in Aid of Displaced Scholars 289, 390  
**employers/employment changes** 1–2, 4, 13, 78–80, **146–50**, 191–93, 201, 202, 255–56, 263–64, 269, 286, 320, 348, 355, 363, 364, 405, 407–08, 432, 446–47, 459–60, 475–76, 494, 505  
 Endo, Mitsuye 236  
**enemy aliens** xii, 18, 22, 86, **150–52**, 178, 233–38, 241, 262, 333, 357  
 Engles, D. D. 37, 357, 486–87  
**enlistment standards** 18, 83, **152–55**, 196, 236, 287, 291, 403, 404, 418, 420, 439, 469, 476, 481, 498  
*Enola Gay* 290  
 Enright, Marion R. 443  
 Enrikin, Sara 343, 344  
 Enrikin, Helen 344  
 Erickson, Elizabeth 479  
 Erlanger, Alene 121, 134  
 Equal Pay Act 156, 341–42, 349, 397  
**Equal Rights Amendment** xii, 66, 71–72, 95, **155–57**, 245, 262, 266, 269, 280, 319, 324, 346, 397, 460–61, 497  
 Eschenberg, Billie Mae 492  
 essential civilian employment 53, 138, 195, 256, 262, 408, 475  
**European Theater of Operations (ETO)** 3, 33, 59–63, 73, 87, 103, 108–09, 114, 116–18, 131, 154, **157–64**, 174, 184, 273, 316, 362, 368, 432, 453–54, 457, 463, 473, 474, 488, 501  
   civilian women in 119, 175, 179, 206, 231, 249–50, 279, 387, 395, 398, 420–21, 508  
   military women in 35, 75, 196–97, 220, 221, 117, 119, 120, 165, 166, 169, 177, 230, 314, 326–26, 360, 366, 372, 379, 380, 391, 411, 438, 453, 490  
 Evans, Dale 369  
 Evans, Jane 448  
 Evans, Lillian 281  
 Executive Order 8802 9, 11, 155, 310, 409, 430  
 Executive Order 9066 235, 261  
  
 Fair, Alethia M. 167  
 Faith, Don 126, 127, 287, 424  
 Falter, John 349  
 Farm Security Administration 27, 64, 261  
 Farrington, Betty 201  
**fatalities** 10, 16, 25, 40, 75, 89, **165–68**, 178, 215, 247, 300, 314, 317, 339, 366, 438, 479, 488–89  
 Fauset, Crystal Bird 396  
 FBI (Federal Bureau of Investigation) 4, 151, 152, 233–34, 269, 414, 432  
 Federal Writers Project 183  
 Ferber, Edna 41  
 Fermi, Enrico 151, 289, 390  
 Fermi, Laura 151, 289, 290  
 Ferrell, Mary 117, 120  
 Fessler, Diane Burke 75, 102, 109, 117, 127, 154, 159, 161, 163, 170, 171, 200, 201, 221, 343  
 Field, Herta and Noel 187–88  
 Fillebrown, A. Louise 13, 384  
 Finland, 52, 104  
 Fisher, M.F.K. 98  
 Fitzgerald, Ella 307  
 Flanner, Janet 106, 181  
 Flannery, Flossie 166  
**Fleeson, Doris** 74, 103, 159, **168–69**, 179, 284, 396  
**flight nurses** 20, 26, 49, **169–72**, 221, 314, 322, 337, 360, 509  
**Flikke, Julia O.** 25, 37, 45, 113, **172–73**, 241, 314, 316, 370, 442  
 Flint, Margaret 8, 126, 251, 366, 499, 501  
 Florida (*see also* Daytona Beach) i, 16, 42, 72, 74, 88, 89, 95, 108, 115, 151, 155, 156, 186, 208, 220, 226, 245, 257, 310, 356, 360, 382, 414, 418, 429, 459, 485, 504, 506  
   Orlando 248, 258, 267, 478  
   Pensacola 16, 298, 405, 482  
   Tampa 16, 54, 89, 95, 207–08, 258, 488, 327  
 Fluegel, Edna 447  
*Flying* 275, 286, 287, 404, 468, 478, 483  
 Flynn, Elizabeth Gurley 384, 465  
 Folks, Helen Fornay 282  
**food, shortages/production changes** xii, 83–84, 130–31, **174–77**, 194–95, 216, 222, 306, 440, 461–63, 470, 494, 504–05  
   conservation/rationing 5–6, 54, 97–98, 209–210, 330–31, 348, 373–77  
   military “mess” 35, 61, 126, 175, 287, 450, 483  
   new products/methods 7, 80, 115, 148–49, 375, 402, 407, 472  
   overseas 37–8, 59–62, 65, 84, 90, 100–02, 160–61, 239–40, 282, 325, 326, 337, 348, 357, 358, 375, 378, 386, 391, 392, 400, 461, 462–63  
 Fonda, Jane 303  
 Fontaine, Joan 302  
 Forbes, Esther 41  
 Ford, Betty 156  
 Ford, Gerald 156, 433  
*Foreign Affairs* 432  
 Forrest, Helen 307  
 Forrestal, James 119, 416, 423, 496  
**Fort, Cornelia** **177–78**, 201, 343, 468, 477, 479  
*Fortnightly* 61  
*Fortune* 55, 149, 284, 352, 384  
 Foster, Carrie 448, 503  
 Foster, Constance 378  
 Foster, Cora M. 121  
 Foster, Helen 253  
 Foster, Margaret 289  
 Fox, Anna Steele 75  
 Fox, Annie G. 344  
 Franco, Francisco 34, 183, 187  
 Franco, Jere Bishop 313  
 Frank, Camilla Mays 379  
 Franklin, Ann 325  
 Frantz, Virginia 403  
 Freid, Bernice Sains 244  
 Freidman, Barbara 472  
**French women/France** (*see also* European Theater of Operations) 8, 49, 51–52, 58, 116–118, 120, 159, 161–64, **178–81**, 195–96, 205, 250, 261, 326, 350, 364, 367, 372, 378, 390, 392, 420, 421, 434, 448–49, 453–54, 473, 487, 488, 501, 503  
 Freud, Sigmund 363  
 Friedan, Betty 404  
 Fromm-Reichmann, Frieda 364, 391

- Fujiwara, Momye 238  
 Fulbright, William 72  
 Furnas, J.C. 21, 79, 284, 450  
 Furtenberg, Frau 327
- Galloway, Mera 272  
 Gandhi, Mahatma 56  
 Gannett newspapers 88, 103  
**Gardener, Julia Ann 182–83**, 184  
 Gardner, Ava 303  
 Gardner, Mona 306  
 Garland, Judy 302  
 Garrett, Mary 45, 110, 182  
 Garrison, William Lloyd 31  
 Garson, Greer 302  
 Gaulden, Roberta 311  
 Gaylord, Gladys 295  
 Gee, Maggie 479  
**Gellhorn, Martha** xii, 60, 77, 103, 106, 117, 159, 161, 178, 180, **183–84**, 396, 421, 439  
 General Electric 144  
 General Federation of Women's Clubs 91, 447  
 German-Americans, *see* enemy aliens  
 Germany/Germans (*see also* occupied Germany; Hitler)  
   American women in 10, 12, 33, 52, 55–56, 58, 205, 415, 420, 439,  
   as a government/enemy 34, 59, 81, 116–18, 122, 133, 144,  
   150, 157–64, 178–81, 186–87, 199–200, 207, 231, 252, 281,  
   288, 296, 302, 316–18, 325–26, 331, 343–44, 350, 355, 364,  
   369, 386, 389–90, 400, 414, 425, 432, 453, 455, 503, 508  
 George VI of Great Britain 29, 35, 62–63  
 George, Harold L. 277  
 George Washington University 63, 195  
 Georgia 36, 41, 76, 95, 116, 127, 139, 198, 210, 226, 237, 270,  
   297, 325, 396, 397, 402, 423–24, 425, 429, 475, 481, 499,  
   507  
 Gerry, Eloise 184–85  
**GI Bill of Rights** 41, 95–96, 128, **185–86**, 209, 226, 229, 243,  
   259, 352, 353, 394, 459, 495  
 Gibson, Eleanor J. 364  
 Giddings, Thelma 9, 502  
**Gildersleeve, Virginia** 96, 121, 185, **186–87**, 203, 297, 329, 424,  
   447, 481  
 Giles, Nell 141, 149, 190, 273, 284, 405, 443, 465  
 Gilgin, Albert and Carol 364  
 Gillars, Mildred Sisk 33, 432  
 Gilles, Betty 479  
 Gillis, Marian C. 167  
 Gilmer, Carol Lynn 471  
 Girl Scouts 423  
**Glaser, Erica** xii, **187–88**, 243, 420, 422  
 Glasgow, Ellen 41  
 Glin, Glenn 267  
 Glover, Katherine 6, 504  
 Godwin, Susan 166  
 Goedde, Petra 326, 327  
 Goering, Hermann 103, 331  
 Goillet, Paul 196  
*Golf Digest* 115  
**Gold Star Mothers** 74, **188–89**, 334  
 Goldthorpe, Ann 358, 359  
 Goldwater, Barry 279, 416, 479  
 Gollinger, Mary 166  
*Good Housekeeping* 5, 7, 64, 73, 109, 231, 284, 321  
 Goodell, Jane 379  
 Goodrich, Frances 140  
 Goodwin, Iverna 464
- Goodwin, Katherine 189–90**  
 Gordon, Beate Sirota 329  
 Gorham, Ethel 81, 82, 271, 296, 375, 492  
 Gorham, Thelma Thurston 10, 258  
**Gould, Beatrice 189–91**, 203, 284, 475  
 Gould, Bruce 190, 284  
*Gourmet* 98, 283, 284  
**“government girls”** xii, 6, 52, 83, 145–46, **191–94**, 225, 230,  
   247, 256, 343, 380, 384, 418, 456  
 Gower, Charlotte 291  
 Gower, Pauline 61, 157, 476  
 Grable, Betty 303  
 Grabowski, Virginia (Shannon) 162, 221  
 Graham, Annie E. 291  
 Graham, Martha 307  
 Granrud, Britta xi  
 Graves, Elizabeth Riddle 289  
 Great Depression 1, 14, 24, 27, 44, 47, 53, 55, 64, 68, 71, 81,  
   132, 134, 136, 146, 156, 183, 186, 191, 204, 207, 216,  
   220, 224, 255, 259, 261, 264, 278, 289, 310, 311, 321, 342,  
   345–46, 364, 389, 396, 422, 429, 487, 509  
 Green, Anne Bosanko 21, 380, 439  
 Greenhow, Rose 420  
 Greenlaw, Olga 392  
 Greer, Emily G. 486  
 Grey, Bettie 153, 289, 482  
 Grief, Lotti 289  
 Grimes, Frances F. 479  
*Gripsholm* 358, 392  
 Gropius, Walter 391  
 Gruhitz—Hoyt, Olga 102, 116, 117, 118, 162, 176, 180, 414, 454,  
   455  
 Guggenheim, Peggy 28, 261  
 Gulovich, Maria 121
- Hadassah 243, 246, 389  
 Hagan, Frank 318  
 Hahn, Emily “Mickey” 77, 357  
 Hall, Elizabeth 419  
**Hall, Florence 194–95**, 505  
**Hall, Virginia** xii, 88, 121, **195–96**, 205, 420  
**Hallaren, Mary A.** 58, 114, 120, **196–97**, 198, 212, 398, 490,  
   496  
 Hamerschlag, Vera 418  
 Hamilton, Esther 357  
 Hamlet, Julia 496  
 Hamlin, Mary Buffum 319, 387  
 Hammond, Laurence 145, 147  
**Hancock, Joy Bright 197–99**, 201, 344, 398, 483–84, 496  
 Hanna, Eleanor 167  
 Hanson, Esther Vorhees 314  
 Harada, Grace 236  
 Harding, Warren 113  
*Harper's* 45, 53, 130, 141, 147, 148, 238, 259, 355, 384, 443,  
   444  
*Harper's Bazaar* 58, 64  
**Harriman, Daisy (Florence)** 121, **199–200**, 279, 390, 396  
 Harris, Maurine 482  
 Harsin, Glatys 488  
 Hartendorp, A.V.H. 359  
 Hartigan, Grace 28  
 Hartson, Mary 479  
 Harvard University 94, 95, 112, 145, 184, 185, 219, 298, 347,  
   424  
 Haskell, Ruth 25  
 Hastings, Maggie 167, 339, 405  
 Hatchitt, Eunice 39, 100, 101, 119, 302, 357



## INDEX

- Havlick, David 185  
**Hawaiian women**/Hawaii 16, 29, 37, 65, 106, 156, 157, 167, 173, 177, 198, **200–202**, 221, 234, 237, 238, 253, 291, 293, 300, 314, 315, 343–44, 362, 379, 419, 450, 484, 486  
Hawes, Elizabeth 342, 447  
Hayes, Ira 312  
Haynsworth, Leslie, and David Toomey 177  
Hayton-Keeva, Sally 355, 390  
Hayworth, Rita 303  
Health, Education, and Welfare, Department of 211–12  
Hearst Newspapers 334  
Heller, Helen West 28  
Hellman, Lillian 140, 302, 303  
Hemingway, Ernest 60, 77, 103, 104, 183–84  
Henderson, Leon 331  
Hepburn, Katherine 131, 139, 257, 302  
Herbst, Josephine 104, 439  
Herman, Ellen 364  
Herman, Ruby 270  
**Herrick, Elinore** 141, 148, **202–03**, 351, 396  
Herrick, Genevieve Forbes 498  
Herzog, Herta 364, 391  
**Hickey, Margaret** 66, 95, 202, **203–04**, 256, 264, 285, 348, 396, 448, 475, 476  
Hickman, Emily G.  
**Hickok, Lorena** 199, **204–05**, 243, 396, 397  
**Hiett, Helen** **205**, 250, 369  
Higashi, Lillian 237  
**Higgins, Marguerite** 103, 163, **205–06**  
**Hill, Blanche** **207**, 276  
Hill, Mary E. 443  
Hirsch, Rhoda K. 231  
**Hispanic women** 9, 22, 43, 199, **207–09**, 284, 310, 342, 384, 475, 504  
Hitler, Adolf xii, 11, 22, 32, 34, 56, 83, 103, 116–17, 125, 157, 163, 183, 242, 249, 316, 334, 364, 390, 399, 400, 414, 432, 453  
**hoarding** 98, **209–11**, 214, 228–30, 330–31, 374–75  
Hobart, Mrs. Lowell 475  
**Hobby, Oveta Culp** 2, 8, 25, 29, 34, 36, 57, 63, 114, 115–16, 120, 125–27, 130, 153, 173, 189, 196, **211–13**, 251, 262, 291, 297, 299, 346, 371, 384, 395, 397, 413, 414, 418, 423, 425, 438, 439, 442, 481, 496, 498, 499, 500, 501  
Hochbaum, H.W. 462  
Hoffman, Janet Haddon 109, 162  
**Hogan, Rosemary** 37, 101, **213–14**  
Hohman, Leslie B. 70, 78, 190, 284  
Hoisington, Elizabeth P. 58  
**Hokinson, Helen** 41, 42, 135, 190, **214–15**, 283  
Holcomb, Thomas 290  
Holdsworth, Alberta M. 443  
Holiday, Billie 307  
Hollingsworth, Odessa 166  
Hollywood xi, 6, 21, 136, 302, 332, 369, 450  
Holocaust, *see* concentration camps, refugees, Jewish-American women  
Home Demonstration Clubs, *see* home economics  
**home economics** 6, 80, 129–130, 194–95, **215–17**, 312, 331, 376, 402, 440, 462  
**home nursing** **217–18**, 220–21, 320, 386  
Homestead Act 151, 185  
Honolulu, *see* Hawaii  
*Honolulu Star-Bulletin* 106  
Hoover, Icie Macy 402  
Hoopes, Roy 380, 405, 408, 433, 453, 455, 465  
Hoover, Herbert 207, 230  
Hopkins, Harry 204  
**Hopper, Grace** 112, 146, **218–20**, 231, 248, 403, 481  
Horney, Karen 364, 391  
Hornig, Lilli 289  
Horton, Mildred, *see* McAfee, Mildred  
Hoskins, Ann 453  
**hospitals** 25–27, 35, 68–69, 100–02, 159, 217–18, 201, **220–22**, 308, 314, 320–22, 323, 327, 343, 344, 356, 386, 465, 466  
hospital ships 105, 108, 117, 119–20, 221, 225, 314–15, 339–40, 360, 386, 435, 455  
hotels 31, 55, 70, 72, 126, 307, 434, 437  
hours of work 1, 14, 62, 122, 148–49, 155, 202, 212, 222, 224, 286, 315, 317, 318, 342, 344, 384, 402, 403, 412, 470  
*House and Garden* 7, 462, 506  
*House Beautiful* 7, 284, 492  
**housework** 1, 96–99, 134, 135, 140, **222–24**, 228–29, 263, 284, 287, 350, 376, 427, 429, 492  
**housing** 9, 43, 52–53, 70–71, 94–95, 122, 186, 192–93, 223, **224–27**, 229, 256, 258–60, 292, 306, 350–51, 366, 490, 491, 492  
Houston, *see* Texas  
*Houston Chronicle* 211, 212  
Howard, Vicki 486  
Howson, Mary H. 479  
Hughes, Langston 252  
Hughes, Megan 328  
Hull, Peggy (Duell) 104, 105, 106, 253, 421  
Humphery, Yvonne 360  
Hunt, Harriot K. 347  
Hunter College 95, 187, 292, 481, 482, 484  
Hurstons, Zora Neale 42  
Hyde, Doris 443  
*Hygeia* 78, 284, 321  
IBM (International Business Machines) 145, 247, 403  
Ickes, Harold 264, 346  
Idaho 52, 236  
Illinois xi, 19, 78, 132, 140, 151, 198, 205, 225, 235, 304, 334  
Chicago 15, 19, 20, 23, 42, 103, 119, 136, 151, 166, 172, 205, 214, 242, 263, 267, 289, 334, 347, 349, 375, 402, 423, 429, 431, 433, 442, 466, 475, 482, 494, 503  
Imlay, Janet 492  
immigrant women, *see* enemy aliens and refugees  
Immigration Quota Act 233, 242, 389, 390  
*Independent Woman* 29, 30, 48, 66, 78, 91, 99, 179, 192, 194, 203, 224, 262, 266, 282, 285, 323, 342, 347, 364, 372, 384, 396, 403, 407, 419, 430, 439, 440, 448, 460, 471, 482, 505, 506  
India, *see* CBI, China-Burma-India Theater of Operations  
Indiana 10, 19, 57, 95, 119, 124, 156, 166, 304, 352, 387, 423, 481, 504  
**inflation** 50–51, 209–10, **228–30**, 330–31, 373–77, 459  
Ingalls, Laura 333  
Inouye, Daniel 106  
**intelligence, military** (*see also* censorship; spies) xii, 111–12, **230–232**, 253, 344, 410–12, 420–22, 460  
International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers 144, 410, 430, 431  
International Ladies' Garment Workers Union 441  
International Monetary Fund 423  
International News Service (INS) 104, 107, 117, 161, 253, 319  
Iowa (*see also* Des Moines, Fort) 24, 36, 95, 112, 125–26, 159, 190, 241, 290, 304, 305, 310, 312, 374, 424, 426–27, 482  
Ireland 23, 58, 150, 261, 473  
Irwin, Virginia 105  
Issacs, Eliza 201  
Italy (*see also* European Theater of Operations; Mussolini) 24–25, 57, 58, 119, 121, 150, 158–59, 165, 239, 279, 302, 316–18, 328, 378, 457, 473, 487

- Italian-Americans, *see* enemy aliens  
 Ivy League 109, 186
- Jackson, Leona 358  
 Jackson, Rita and Ralph 273  
 Jacobs, Jane 332  
 Jacoby, Annalee 392  
 Jacoby, Mary Putnam 37  
 Jahoda, Marie 364, 391  
 James, Theresa 159, 479  
 James, William 364  
 Janeway, Elizabeth 71, 190, 284  
 Japan/Japanese (*see also* occupied Japan) xii, 12, 16–18, 34–37, 76, 90, 100–02, 122, 144, 150, 167, 177, 182, 200–01, 254, 266–67, 274, 288, 296, 315–16, 327–29, 331, 336–40, 343–44, 350, 357, 362, 386, 391, 392, 415, 432, 453, 454–55, 486, 503  
**Japanese-American women** 5, 91, 151, 152, 194, 201, **233–39**, 241, 161, 267, 356, 384, 432–33, 503, 504, 507  
 Jarrell, Ira 429  
 Jeansonne, Glenn 334  
 Jefferson Barracks National Cemetery 167, 247  
 Jeffries, Linnie 315  
 Jenckes, Virginia 387  
**Jensen, Agnes** 25, 62, 166, 175, **239–241**, 273, 360, 371, 405  
**Jewish-American women** 152, 199, 208, **241–43**, 273, 325, 334, 346 389, 396, 397, 398–99, 447, 448, 449  
 Jews, European (*see also* concentration camps; refugees) 11, 33, 56, 150, 152, 179, 187–88, 242–43, 289, 325, 333, 364, 386, 389–90, 396, 447, 503, 508  
 Johann, Helen 28  
 John, Betty B. 161  
 Johns Hopkins University 45, 110, 182  
 Johnson, Lyndon Baines 137, 169, 197, 279, 399  
 Johnson, Nona 88, 291, 292, 376, 380, 434, 450, 456  
 Johnson, Osa Leighty 41  
 Johnston, Mark 336  
 Johnston, Mary 126  
 Johnstone, Ann Hartwell 448  
 Jones, Dorothy Dailey 61  
 Jones, Etta 16, 358  
 Jones, Jennifer 302  
 Jones, John Bush 308  
 Jones, Lillian 367  
 Jones, Marilyn Jeanne 292, 333  
 Jones, Mary 292, 333  
 Jones, “Mother” Mary Harris 446  
 Jones, Mrs. Ralph J. 448  
 Jones, Vi Nelson 162, 163  
 Jopling, Lucy Wilson 337, 385  
*Journal of Home Economics* 80, 284  
*Journal of Public Health* 4, 284  
 Jouvenat, Dorothy Lonergan 170  
**jury duty** 155, **244–45**, 262–63, 266
- Kahn, Florence** 53, 156, 243, **246–47**, 320, 394  
 Kahlo, Frida 28  
 Kaiser, Henry J./Kaiser Industries 1, 54, 79–80, 123, 148–49, 226, 260, 342, 399, 406, 407  
 Kaleileonalani, Queen Emma 200  
 Kallen, Kitty 307  
 Kaminski, Teresa 359  
 Kansas 13, 14, 111, 114, 166, 168, 203, 312, 502, 509  
 Kansas City, *see* Missouri  
 Karle, Isabella 289  
 Katz, Hilda 28  
 Keefe, Mary Doyle 399
- Keene, Edith 479  
 Kelly, Mary 14, 148  
 Kennedy, John F. 23, 49, 169, 200, 342, 346, 397  
 Kennedy, Joseph 396, 440  
**Kent, Helen Greene** 72, 120, 167, **247**, 339  
 Kentucky, 25, 52, 59, 114, 170, 171, 237, 241, 304, 323, 429  
 Kepner, Cora 147  
 Key, Francis Scott 308  
**keypunch operators** 231, **247–48**, 403  
 Kieler, Eugenia 319, 453  
 Kimbell, Marie 380, 382, 405  
 Kimbrough, Emily 41, 215  
 Kincaid, Thomas 254  
 King, Alice Dana 166  
 King, Ernest 287, 484  
**Kirchwey, Freda** 42, 244, **248–49**, 283, 390, 415, 448  
 Kirk, Norman T. 25, 317  
**Kirkpatrick, Helen** 103, 121, 181, **249–51**  
**kitchen police (KP)** 15, 126, **251–52**, 424  
 Klaw, Barbara Van Doren 54, 70, 259, 332, 356, 434, 440, 450, 508  
 Kleeman, Rita 448  
 Knopf, Alfred A. 190, 252–53  
**Knopf, Blanche** 42, 190, 244, **252–53**, 332, 415  
 Knox, Frank 424  
 Knox, Sally 433  
 Kochendorfer, Violet 163, 326, 327, 387, 391, 500  
 Kohlenberg, Mary Jane 109, 274, 434  
 Kohlhoff, Dean 16  
 Koikari, Mire 329  
 Konold, Kristine 369  
 Kopchak, Louise Dumond 127  
 Koranda, Ernestine 120  
 Kordek, Stephanie 295  
 Korean War 26, 47, 49, 56, 65, 97, 186, 189, 198, 206, 270, 334, 451, 509  
 Koutelas, Deana 158  
 Krauz, Erwin 296  
 Kross, Peter 195, 196, 420, 421  
**Kuhn, Irene Corbally** 104, **253–54**, 369, 421, 439  
 Ku Klux Klan 2  
 Kurys, Sophie 20
- Labor, Department of (*see also* Women’s Bureau) 2, 23, 40, 53, 66, 144, 262, 286, 343, 345–46, 355, 425–27, 446, 459, 460, 475, 506  
**labor force** (*see also* defense industries) xii, 12, 23, 39–40, 53, 66, 70, 122, 146, 191–93, 202, 236, **255–57**, 263–65, 279, 288, 319, 341–42, 345–46, 348–49, 400, 425–27, 445–46, 465, 470, 475–76  
*Ladies Home Journal* 5, 64, 65, 70, 74, 78, 82, 97, 103, 126, 157, 190–91, 203, 282, 284, 286, 314, 356, 365, 375, 387, 396, 400, 432–33, 448, 465, 475, 477, 491, 499  
 La Guardia, Fiorello 90  
 Laird, Dorothy 62  
 Lake, Eleanor 287, 293, 460, 483  
**Lamaar, Heddy** **257–58**, 404  
 Lamb, Ann E. 291  
 Landau, Mary M. 167  
 Landers, Ann 488  
 Landis, Carol 303, 450  
**landladies** 53, 71, 225, **258–60**, 353  
 Landolt, Lille Cordes 304  
 Landon, Margaret 42  
**Langdon, Grace** 78, **260–61**, 440  
**Lange, Dorothea** 27, **261–62**  
 Langlis, Arthur B. 234, 235

## INDEX

- Lanham Act 260  
 LaPalme, Marjorie 117  
 Lash, Joseph 396  
 Latham, Natalie Wales 65  
 Lauwers, Barbara 120, 129, 421  
 Lave, Mary 166, 438  
 Lawrence, Kathryn B. 479  
**lawyers**, 126, 211, 245, **262–63**, 299, 318, 327, 334, 356, 447, 490–91  
**layoffs** **263–65**, 342, 345, 351–53  
 Legendre, Gertrude 421  
**League of Women Voters** 66, 136, 138, 203, 245, **265–66**, 284, 320, 334, 354, 377, 396, 447, 448, 466, 475, 493, 504  
 Lear Corporation 13  
 Lee, Harper 42  
**Lee, Hazel Ying** 86, **266–67**, 312, 479  
**Lee, Rose Hum** 85, **267–69**, 336, 421  
 Leech, Margaret 41, 332  
 Leff, Sylvia Rebarber 368  
 Lehman, John 219  
 Lend Lease 6, 247  
 Lentz, Anne A. 290, 424  
**lesbianism** 179, 269–71, 394, 413, 422  
 Letallier, Jeane 272  
**letter writing** (*see also* V-Mail) 73–75, 175, 220, 271–74, 296, 313, 332, 337, 357, 412, 414–15, 463–65, 488, 491  
 Leveau, Lily and Lorraine 312, 313  
 Levine, Vicky 243, 447  
 Levy, Betrice S. 28  
 Lewis, Sinclair 432  
 Libby's Foods 5, 6  
 Library of Congress 28, 96, 261, 312, 348  
*Life* 28, 31, 33, 55–56, 64, 83, 100, 103, 104, 124, 156, 163, 167, 170, 176, 181, 183, 210, 214, 250, 261, 283, 290, 358, 377, 392, 400, 427, 477  
*Liberty* 214  
 Liles, Wilna Eva 166  
 Lil'uokalani, Queen Lydia Kama'kaeha 200  
 Lincoln, Abraham 334  
 Lindbergh, Charles 333  
 Link, Edwin 274  
**Link Ladies** 207, **274–75**, 292, 299, 300, 429  
 Lisagor, Peter 206  
 Litoff, Judith Barrett, and David C. Smith 117, 131, 158, 159, 161, 244, 274  
**Little Church Around the Corner** **275–76**, 485  
 Lochridge, Patricia 105, 210, 284, 325, 334, 375, 466  
 Lockheed 10, 123, 286  
 Loeb, John Jacob and Redd Evans 399  
 Logan, Paul 175  
 Long, Frances 100, 357, 392  
 Long, Huey 71  
 Long, Tania (Daneill) 104, 168  
 Longworth, Alice Roosevelt 395  
*Look* 58  
 Lookstein, Haskel 242, 243, 249  
 Loop, Paula 479  
 Lord & Taylor 442  
 Los Angeles, *see* California  
*Los Angeles News* 103  
*Los Angeles Times* 28  
 Louisiana 22, 126, 225, 245, 260, 371, 377, 382, 383, 453, 499  
**Love, Nancy Harkness** 92, 120, 177, 178, **276–77**, 468, 476  
 Love, Robert M. 276  
 Lovejoy, Alice 479  
 Lowe, Juliet Gordon 251  
 Lowell, Juliet 42  
 Lowenberg, Miriam 80  
 Loy, Myrna 302  
**Luce, Clare Boothe** 137, 140, **278–79**, 283, 400, 475  
 Lucerno, Arnold 214  
 Luoni, R. Virginia 101  
 Lutz, Aleta 119, 314  
**Lutz, Alma** **179–80**, 351, 460  
 Lynn, Vera 307  
 Lytle, Wilma 241  
  
**Maasdam** 60, 75, 120, 158, 205, 231, **281–82**, 386, 435  
 MacArthur, Douglas 30, 63, 120, 157, 206, 327–29, 415, 421, 490, 500  
 MacDonald, Betty Bard 42  
 MacDonald, Inez 39  
 MacDonald, Margaret 365  
*Mademoiselle* 206  
 Maffit, Minnie 91, 285  
**magazines** 4–7, 37, 44, 48, 51, 54, 58, 60, 78, 80, 97–98, 103–07, 138, 143, 176, 179, 189–90, 278, **282–84**, 332, 348, 356, 369, 385, 415, 458, 460, 471, 485, 488, 491  
 Mahler-Werful, Alma 391  
 Mahoney, Mary 322  
 mail, *see* letter writing  
 Maine 25, 90, 128, 151, 159, 189, 377, 394, 416–17, 481, 505  
**males**, comparisons with (*see also* pay and rank) 1, 6, 13–14, 18–19, 32, 41, 95, 102, 106, 145–47, 153–54, 165, 185–86, 210, 240, 263, 282, **285–88**, 299, 305, 310, 318, 331, 333, 338, 341–42, 344, 347, 367, 370–71, 407–09, 414, 445–46, 469, 470, 477, 478, 496, 500  
 Mallon, Charlotte McFall 172  
 managers/management, *see* employers/employment changes  
 Mandl, Fritz 257  
 Mandot, Elsie Ott 171  
 Maness, Ann 241  
 Mangerich, Agnes, *see* Jensen, Agnes  
**Manhattan Project** xii, 57, 151, 231, 243, **288–90**, 306, 402, 454, 464  
 Mann, Jessie 392  
 Mao Tse-tung 415  
 Marie Meyers Flying Circus 32  
**Marines, Women**, 6, 8–9, 35–36, 41, 86, 89, 111, 120, 153–54, 166, 201, 270, 275, 287, **290–94**, 294, 297, 300, 302, 304, 312, 315, 344, 347, 371, 376, 379, 382, 384, 416, 417, 424–25, 439, 441, 442, 443, 450, 456, 458, 475, 486, 495–96, 500  
 Marinettes (World War I) 197, 290, 291, 410, 480, 497  
 Markham, Violet 457  
**marriage** xii, 3, 48, 55, 62, 70–71, 131–32, 152, 154, 161, 185, 258, 262, 269, 273, 275–76, **294–97**, 320, 327, 329, 349, 365, 395, 432, 457–58, 471, 485–87  
     and employment 58, 66, 104, 138, 147, 264, 321, 352, 429  
     and the military 45, 62, 114, 153–54, 197–98, 315, 324, 372, 382, 481–82, 487, 488–89, 490–93, 498, 501, 509  
 Marshall Fields Department Store 442, 482  
 Marshall, George C./Marshall Plan 58, 197, 250, 264, 317, 352, 378, 398, 399, 497, 498, 500  
 Marshall, Thurgood 429  
 Marston, Gladys I. 166, 318  
 Martha, Princess of Norway 199, 200  
 Martin, Frances 208  
 Martin, Glenn/Martin–Marietta 13, 312  
 Martin, George 346, 425  
 Martin, Joseph I. 119, 165  
 Martin, Peggy 479  
 Martin, Pete 331  
 Maryland 52, 53, 86, 115, 123, 124, 167, 226, 237, 258, 293, 304, 305, 306, 315, 380, 412, 482, 496, 505



- Baltimore 80, 121, 145, 179, 195, 277, 342, 362, 407, 426, 445, 451
- Massachusetts i, 30, 117, 127, 146, 151, 197, 215, 277, 280, 281, 291, 315, 383, 388, 393–94, 402, 408, 413, 418, 443, 455, 456, 481, 484, 499
- Boston 34, 88, 129, 130, 139, 140, 167, 297, 322, 342, 345
- Massman, Emory 314
- Matayas, Jennie 475
- May Act 361
- May, Andrew 323–24
- Maxwell, Anne 283
- Mayer, Maria Goeppert 289, 390, 404
- Mayo Clinic 14, 146
- McAfee, Mildred** 41, 95, 96, 153, 185, 187, 198, 211, **297–98**, 329, 371, 418, 423, 424, 438, 439, 459, 480–83
- McBride, Evelyn 166
- McBride, Mary Margaret 370
- McCall's* 131, 218, 284, 365, 396, 488, 493
- McCarthy, Dorothy Shikowski 171
- McCarthy, Joseph/McCarthyism 49, 140, 249, 415, 416, 422
- McClellan, Anne 479
- McClellan, John 71
- McClintock, Barbara 147, 404
- McCormick, Anne O'Hare 103, 163, 252, 396, 470
- McCoskrie, Frank 127
- McCullers, Carson 139, 140
- McDaniel, Hattie 302, 370
- McDonald, Audrey Rogers 171
- McDonald, Lea Ola 479
- McGee, Ruby and Charles 17
- McGrory, Mary 169
- McInery, Nancy 185, 419, 459, 460
- McIntosh, Elizabeth 118, 125, 129, 180, 187, 196, 231, 420, 421
- McKee, Helen 159
- McKelvey, Thelma 30, 310, 311, 475, 476
- McKinley, William 200
- McKinnery, Alice 166
- McLaughlin, Kathryn 448
- McMilan, Doris 383
- McMongale, Marion W. 167
- McNeal, Alice 347
- McNair, Leslie 114
- McNutt, Paul 30, 260, 475, 476
- Mead, Margaret 40, 284, 348
- Mediterranean Theater of Operations, *see* North Africa; Italy
- Megargee, Patricia 406
- Meining, Viola 314
- Meitner, Lise 289
- Mencken, H.L. 202, 248, 252, 432
- Menninger, William 365
- Menzie, Mary Brown 102
- Metropolitan Museum of Art 28
- Meyer, Dickey 106
- Meyer, Elizabeth 13, 224, 342
- Mezerik, A. G. 283
- Michigan 20, 47, 151, 166, 191, 241, 263, 276, 277, 289, 488, 497
- Detroit 11, 52, 103, 256, 263, 383, 405, 429, 431, 445–46, 470
- Millard, Ruth 1
- Miller, Frieda 351
- Miller, Grace Porter 108, 112, 127, 132, 161, 175, 251, 269, 272, 296, 362
- Miller, J. Howard 399
- Miller, Lee 105, 325
- military occupational specialty (MOS)** 111, 116, 174, 211, 251, 272, 275, 292, **298–300**, 301, 328, 338, 364, 366, 402, 411, 412, 413, 418, 429, 460, 481, 496, 499–500
- Military Police 251, 263, 287, 362, 372, 379
- Minnesota 42, 86, 158, 162, 175, 191, 232, 237, 240, 307, 312, 313, 387, 421, 475, 504
- Minneapolis 14, 20, 146, 166, 204, 244, 266
- Mirabel, Eva 312
- missionaries 42, 267, 357, 359, 422
- Mississippi 52, 134, 135, 226, 245, 304, 475
- Missouri, 12, 52, 54, 70, 259, 356, 404, 411, 423, 434, 450, 495
- Kansas City 13, 14, 203, 375
- St. Louis 12, 122, 167, 183, 203, 436, 482
- Mitchell, Elsie 90, 167, 182
- Mitchell, Margaret 41
- Moats, Alice–Leone 77, 106, 179, 400
- Mock, Gladys 28
- Moffatt, Virginia 479
- Molley, Viola 221
- Monahan, Evelyn, and Rosemary Neidel 239
- Montana 22, 85, 134, 167, 247, 266, 267
- Monthly Labor Review* 256, 262, 284, 446, 489
- Morris, Gertrude 455
- Moscowitz, Belle 243
- motor pools** 22, 89, 103, 201, 292, 299, **300–01**, 312, 318, 386–87, 436, 455, 466
- Mount Holyoke College 95, 345, 481
- Mountbatten, Lord Louis 84
- Moy, Ruth Wong 86
- Moody, Mary Lee 89
- Mooney, Rita 289
- Moore, Brenda 233, 236, 237
- Moore, Deborah Dash 243, 272, 273, 325
- Moore, Stanley 205
- Moriya, Masako 237
- Morrow, Marjorie 119
- Morton, Agnes Fay 403
- Moses, Beverly 479
- movies** xi, xii, 1, 6, 71, 75, 81, 257, 283, 299, **301–03**, 331, 332, 357, 369, 379, 381, 427, 450, 458, 473, 492
- munitions manufacturing** xii, 10, 123–24, 141, 142, 149, 208, 209, **304–06**, 342, 380, 409, 414, 444, 446, 451, 494–95, 507
- Murrow, Edward R. 58, 205, 250, 369
- Museum of African-American Art 49
- Museum of Modern Art 52, 64, 261
- “musac” 231
- music** xii, 33, 35–36, **307–09**, 332, 368, 379, 387, 399, 433, 450
- Mussolini, Benito 34, 58, 151, 152, 163, 205, 303, 316, 453
- Mutual Broadcasting System 253, 368
- Mydans, Shelley Smith 103, 104, 105, 358, 392, 421
- Myers, Francis 351
- NAACP 43, 299, 429, 447
- Naimor, Belle G. 167
- Nakamura, Misuyo 236
- Nakashima, Hazel Toy 86
- Nash, Margaret 221
- Nate, Eleanor Campbell 166
- Nation, The* 34, 190, 244, 248, 283, 415, 442, 448
- Nation's Business* 80, 286, 506
- National Archives 64, 261
- National Association of Colored Women 9, 193
- National Association Colored Graduate Nurses 25, 49, 175, 193, 322
- National Council of Jewish Women 243
- National Council of Negro Women 43, 384, 499
- National Geographic* 10, 25, 146, 283, 469
- National Museum for Women in the Arts 28
- National Nursing Council 48, 321, 324
- National Organization for Women (NOW) xi, 266
- National War Service Act, *see* Austin-Wadsworth Bill

## INDEX

- National Woman's Party, *see* Woman's Party  
 National Women's Hall of Fame 197  
 National Women's History Museum xi  
 National Women's History Project xi  
**National Youth Administration (NYA)** 9, 43, **310–11**, 312, 409  
**Native American women** 9, 17, 28, 43, 111, 134, 285, 310, **311–13**, 384,  
**Navy Nurse Corps (NNC)** xi, 8, 20, 24, 68, 107, 117, 119, 120, 130, 153, 161, 173, 217, 219, 270, **314–16**, 321, 323, 339, 346, 384, 405, 458, 497  
     at sea/overseas 17, 101, 118, 166, 169, 171, 172, 201, 213, 221, 226, 271, 314–16, 328, 336, 343–44, 357, 358, 359, 436, 442, 443, 455, 480, 494, 496  
     leaders 113–14, 314, 316, 321, 416  
     pay/rank/limitations 153, 154, 294, 343, 371  
 NBC (National Broadcasting Company) 104, 205, 253, 369  
 Nebraska 134, 155, 235, 260, 291, 293, 504  
*Negro History Bulletin* 49  
 Nelson, Donald 122  
 Nesbitt, Josie 101  
 neutrality 34, 58, 59, 61, 77, 92, 104, 106, 119, 137, 150, 157, 177, 179, 183, 187, 195–96, 198, 199–200, 250, 276, 281, 333, 334, 476, 497, 503  
 Nevada 65, 132, 479  
 Nevelson, Louise 28  
 New Deal 27–28, 47, 71, 183, 202, 204, 217, 248, 261, 264, 276, 310, 320, 334, 396, 397, 440, 362, 475  
 New Hampshire 124, 329, 447  
 New Jersey 79, 88, 112, 134, 148, 151, 152, 153, 155, 197, 198, 275, 282, 299, 318–19, 404, 411, 424, 425, 430, 431  
 New Jersey College for Women (Rutgers) 95, 185, 459  
 New Mexico 21, 23, 28, 71, 207, 208, 209, 288–90, 312, 313  
*New Republic* 70, 183, 228, 283, 362, 373, 446  
 New York 5, 21, 51, 65, 88, 90, 119, 148, 151, 166, 167, 202, 204, 249, 253, 271, 272, 274, 282, 346, 347, 380, 390, 397, 404, 407, 412, 413, 431, 443, 447, 456, 471, 496, 497, 509  
     New York City 21–22, 74, 109, 127, 139, 185, 186, 199, 200, 218, 242, 252, 259, 266, 275, 330, 345, 358, 368, 398, 402, 403, 406, 415, 435, 436, 450, 464, 475, 485, 492  
*New York Daily Mirror* 204  
*New York Daily News* 44, 106, 168, 253, 318, 414, 500  
*New York Herald-Tribune* 52, 76, 103, 104, 161, 163, 168, 180, 202, 205, 206, 448  
*New York Post* 88, 103, 195, 205, 244, 250, 448  
*New York Sunday World* 190  
*New York Times* 9, 71, 83, 103, 104, 114, 123, 163, 164, 170, 191, 192, 204, 230, 252, 264, 281, 283, 286, 287, 291, 312, 313, 317, 321, 342, 347, 410, 417, 438, 439, 443, 447, 448, 461, 484, 505  
*New Yorker* 21, 37, 42, 106, 135, 181, 214–15  
*Newsday* 206  
*Newsweek* 8, 60, 81, 97, 105, 126, 132, 166, 169, 197, 229, 251, 275, 277, 283, 285, 287, 290, 291, 304, 347, 376, 413, 414, 427, 440, 442, 468, 481, 500  
 Ng, Katherine 267  
 Nichols, Dorothy 479  
 Nickerson, Virginia 487  
 Niestockel, Alice 162, 163, 176, 180  
 Nightingale, Florence 47, 320  
 network 54, 123, 148, 304, 313, 318, 356, 408, 412, 430  
 Nimitz, Chester 403, 480, 496  
 “Nine Old Women” 120, 189  
 Ninety-Nines 32, 88  
 Nishi, Toshio 329  
 Nixon, Richard 137, 156  
 Nobel Prize xii, 34, 41, 65, 121, 252, 280, 289, 332, 354, 390, 392, 404, 432, 440, 503  
 Noether, Emmy 289, 390  
 Noggle, Ann 165, 477  
 Nolan, Katherine 121  
 Norbeck, Jeanne L. 479  
 Norlin June 162–63  
 Norman, Elizabeth 101, 102, 119  
 Norris, Kathleen 334  
**North Africa** 24–26, 33, 34, 56, 75, 86, 89, 103, 110, 119, 134, 152, 158, 166, 170, 220, 230, 302, 314, **316–19**, 360, 362, 368, 383, 387, 410, 413, 414, 421, 486, 500  
 North Carolina 30, 52, 57, 86, 110, 111, 119, 202, 226, 275, 292, 301, 312, 338, 368, 426, 443, 453, 478  
 North Dakota 267, 433  
 Northrop, John K. 207  
**Norton, Mary T.** xii, 72, 156, 186, 202, 245, **319–20**, 342, 352, 396, 414  
 Norway 41, 58, 104, 199, 279, 281–82, 389, 391, 443, 460  
 Nugster, Mildred Bernice 28  
**nurses/nursing** (see also Army Nurse Corps, Cadet Nurse Corps, Navy Nurse Corps, and hospitals) 14, 20, 24, 45–46, 47–48, 66, 68–69, 79, 113–14, 153, 169–72, 172–73, 217–18, 220–22, 281–82, 314, **320–23**, 323, 338, 343, 344, 347, 349, 382, 386, 465–66  
**Nurses Selective Service Bill** xii, 24, 46, 48, 49, 113, 156, 173, 287, 315, 322, **323–24**, 382, 496  
**occupied Germany** 56, 86, 103, 105, 127, 163–64, 188, 197, 198, 206, 262, 270, **325–27**, 378, 388, 391, 411, 422, 448, 457, 473, 490, 495  
**occupied Japan** 40, 127, 187, 197, 198, 262, **327–29**, 378, 472, 495, 508  
 Odlum, Floyd 92  
 O'Donnell, John 44, 168, 318, 414, 500  
 Oestricher, John 107  
 Oglethorpe, Fort, *see* Georgia  
 Office of Civil Defense, *see* civil defense  
**Office of Price Administration (OPA)** xii, 97, 142, 210, 226, 228–30, 259, **330–31**, 373–77  
 Office of Strategic Services (OSS) (*see also* spies; intelligence, military) 62, 76, 83–84, 88, 118, 120, 121, 125, 146, 180, 186–87, 196, 230, 232, 241, 242, 332, 420–22, 440  
**Office of War Information (OWI)** 5, 27, 64, 69, 83, 105, 142, 208, 210, 231, 242, 256, 259, 302, 308, 328, 330, **331–333**, 349, 352, 369, 374–75, 377, 384, 420, 440, 472  
 Ofstie, Ralph A. 198  
 O. Henry Prize 139, 184  
 Ohio 3, 30, 33, 48, 89, 103, 147, 148, 151, 153, 202, 245, 297, 321, 328, 346, 402, 431, 434, 447, 475, 505  
 O'Keefe, Georgia 209  
 Oklahoma 95, 120, 166, 214, 244, 292, 311, 312, 313, 457, 481  
 Oldenberg, Margaret C. 479  
 older women 3, 18, 44, 48, 79, 101, 106, 126, 135, 142, 147, 153–54, 226, 229, 255, 262, 306, 315, 325, 403, 409, 414, 416, 437, 457, 470, 489, 490, 492, 509  
 Oldfield, Barney 103  
 Oliver, Audry 130  
 Oliver, Ethel 16  
 O'Neill, Helen 291  
 Onyett, Helen Pon 86, 316  
 Oppenheimer, Bernice 147, 342, 409  
 Oppenheimer, Robert 290  
 Oppler, Charlotte and Arthur 329  
*Opportunity: Journal of Negro Life* 284, 321, 384  
**opposition to the war** xi, 204, **333–35**, 447  
 Oregon, 53, 90, 149, 166, 167, 226, 233, 313, 383, 384, 434, 504  
     Portland 52, 54, 79, 123, 237, 292, 315, 333, 363, 407, 408, 409, 475, 504, 507

- Ortiz y Pino, Concha 208  
 Osburn, Josephine Clapp 402  
 Ossian, Lisa 167, 284, 304, 305, 370, 374, 427, 494  
 Osterland, Nellie 201  
 Otes, Cele, and Elizabeth H. Pleck 489  
 Otto, Anna Martha Braun 151  
 Owen, Ruth Bryan 155, 199, 279, 396, 447
- Pacific Theater of Operations (PTO)** 1, 5, 53, 62, 63–64, 73, 108, 114, 120, 144, 154, 157, 163, 166–67, 176, 182–83, 221, 238, 272, 319, 336–41, 344, 362, 368, 403, 414, 426–27, 432, 453, 457, 463–64, 473–74, 485, 490  
 women in 74–75, 84, 103, 104, 108, 119–20, 170–72, 247, 267, 271, 301, 314, 322, 327–29, 357–60, 367, 380, 386, 391, 412, 416, 421, 442, 454, 455, 460, 493, 501
- Painter, Mary 232  
 Palmer, Gladys 283  
 Palmer, Gretta 70, 448  
 parachutes 15, 61, 99, 118, 122, 158, 162, 167, 170, 180, 196, 228, 237, 240, 292, 299, 348, 373, 405, 421, 440, 469, 486  
*Parents* 3, 82, 273, 284, 492  
 Park, Maud Wood 266  
 Parker, Dorothy 122  
 Parker, James Reid 214, 215  
 Patman, Wright 19  
 Patterson, Alicia 206  
 Patterson, Cissy 42, 103, 396, 448, 470  
 Patterson, Jefferson 58–59  
 Patton, George 56, 161  
 Paul, Alice 155–56, 279  
 Paul, Willard 496  
 Pauls, Madeline 435  
**pay** (*see also* males, comparisons to) 19, 22, 49, 50, 51, 88, 127, 201, 208, 237, 319, **341–43**, 369, 397, 429, 430, 431, 446, 470, 505  
 defense industries 10, 11, 14, 148, 263, 305, 312, 342, 348, 383  
 military 18–19, 24, 26, 41, 46, 48, 70, 153, 314, 371, 481, 496–97, 500  
 Payroll Savings Plan, *see* bonds  
 peace movements 11, 34, 67, 137, 187, 190, 266, 280, 333, 351, 396, 447–48, 503–04  
**Pearl Harbor** 13, 16, 21, 30, 37, 53, 60, 76, 77, 81, 90, 157, 177, 200–01, 233, 336, **343–44**, 357, 370, 406, 468  
 Pearson, Judith 420  
 Pegler, Westbrook 396  
 Pentagon (as a place; *see also* War Department) 35, 54, 192, 197, 198, 231, 397, 509  
 Pennsylvania 10, 65, 120, 258, 304, 305, 348, 362, 368, 443  
 Philadelphia 11, 36, 42, 51, 110, 154, 167, 203, 208, 225, 286, 305, 320, 407, 414, 431, 433, 475  
 Pepper, Claude 156, 342  
**Perkins, Frances** 2, 23, 53, 66, 122, 127, 144, 155–56, 191, 202, 203, 256, 262, 264, 310, 320, 342, **345–46**, 352, 396, 425, 426, 431, 446, 460, 475  
 Pershing, John J. 410  
 Pesut, Elizabeth 119  
 Petacci, Clara 152, 163  
 Peters, Ruth 283, 442  
 Peterson, Gene 176, 274  
 Peterson, Grace 161  
 Peterson, Mrs. Lester 392  
 Pettoruto, Marco 509  
 Phelps, Johnnie 270  
 Philadelphia, *see* Pennsylvania  
 Philippines/Filipinos 9, 24, 37–39, 45, 62, 68, 100–102, 113, 118–19, 172, 174, 213, 221, 234, 254, 316, 327, 336, 350, 357–60, 392, 405, 455, 509
- Phillips, Mary G. 46, 398  
 photography, military 38, 298, 299, 318, 366, 411, 412, 438, 464, 490  
 photojournalists, *see* correspondents, war  
**physicians** 37, 110–11, 217, 221–22, 237, 285, 288, 291, 315, **346–48**, 386, 400, 414, 439, 440, 458  
 Pickel, Margaret 60  
 Pierce, Ann Stiffer 319  
 Pinter, Marie 112, 404–05, 456  
 Pittsburgh, *see* Pennsylvania  
*Pittsburgh Courier* 43, 385  
 Planned Parenthood 43, 44  
 Plimpton, ElvaRene Daughhetee 408  
 Plummer, Charlotte 35, 293  
 Polchiopek, Julia 221  
 Polk, Catherine 103  
 Pollack, Jane 126, 136, 251, 301, 318, 380, 384, 442, 499  
 polls 30–31, 51, 176, 228, 323, 330, 342, 352, 374, 377, 378, 395, 462, 463, 473  
 Poole, Barbara 287, 478  
 Popenoe, Paul 95, 492–93  
 Popkin, Zelda 284, 489  
 Popov family 390  
*Popular Mechanics* 284  
 Porter, Helen 241  
 Porter, Katherine Ann 41, 42  
 Portland, *see* Oregon  
**posters** 1, 2, 6, 24, 27, 51, 69, 73, 74, 79, 92, 96–99, 132, 175–79, 208, 225, 234, 259, 272, 290, 308, 312, 332, 337, **348–51**, 349, 362, 363, 382, 456, 457, 463–64, 494  
**postwar** xii, 7, 66, 137, 188, 263–65, 280, 320, 343, **351–55**, 364, 398, 431, 432, 439, 479, 493  
 Potenbyna, Orry 295  
 Power, Tyrone 380  
 Pratt-Whitney 148  
**pregnancy** xii, 4, 39, 44–45, 49, 62, 71, 105, 145, 213, 222, 223, 253, 296, 318, 321, 331, **355–57**, 359, 390, 392, 395, 414, 472, 473, 474, 489, 493  
 Prentiss, A.M. 305  
 Princeton University 23, 289  
**prisoners of war** **357–61**  
 Americans xi–xii, 6, 16, 24, 38–39, 62, 101–102, 114, 119, 120, 196, 213, 221, 254, 302, 316, 322, 328, 332, 339, 356, 357–60, 386, 387, 392, 393, 455, 508  
 enemies/others 9, 24, 38–39, 75, 161, 162–63, 178, 187, 195, 201, 336, 360–61, 390  
 Prokopioff, Anecia 16, 359  
**prostitution** xii, 77, 85, 162, 287, **361–63**, 379, 406, 409, 414, 449, 456–57  
**psychologists/psychological problems** xii, 4, 81–83, 111, 159, 170, 171, 175–76, 218, 270, 318, 337, 339, 346, **363–65**, 391, 412, 414, 423, 460, 488, 493–94  
*Publisher's Weekly* 252, 303  
 Puchilla, Rose 166  
 Puerto Rico, *see* Hispanic women; South America  
 Pulitzer Prize xii, 41, 42, 64, 103, 140, 163, 205, 252, 332  
 Pullen, Olive 298  
*Pulse* 194, 284, 305, 384  
 Putney, Martha 36  
 Pyle, Ernie 42, 106
- Quakers 140, 182, 333, 389  
**Quartermaster Corps** 130, 174–75, 189, 220, 338, 362, **366–67**, 412, 441, 442  
 Queen Elizabeth (“Queen Mum”) 35, 62–63  
 Quinn, Margaret 17  
 Quimby, Edith 23, 289



## INDEX

- Quimby, Harriet 32, 88  
 Quonset huts 327
- Rabinoff, Rose 388  
 radar 7, 144, 299  
 Radcliffe College 64, 184, 195, 280, 420, 424  
 Rado, Emily Crisler 421  
**radio**, broadcast xii, 3, 6, 15, 33, 58, 71, 102–07, 144, 205, 223, 231, 253–54, 278, 282, 296, 307, 311, 331, 332, 368–70, 382, 384, 390, 396, 414, 432–33, 448, 455–56, 457, 461, 475, 504  
 radio, shortwave/military communication 15, 90, 118, 167, 178, 196, 231, 257–58, 299, 317, 343, 349, 368, 392, 404, 410, 500  
*Radio News* 284, 317, 500  
 Raffa, Margaret Richey 171  
 Ragonetti, Marie 448  
 railroads (*see also* travel) 10, 11, 54, 85, 124, 313, 397, 434, 470  
 Raines, Rebecca Robbins 410, 411  
 Ralph, Anne 453  
 Ralston, Blanche 475  
 Ralston, Katherine, *see* Goodwin, Katherine  
**rank** 25, 34, 45–46, 57, 89, 110, 153–54, 173, 196, 197, 198, 212, 213, 218, 239, 291, 297, 298, 312, 321, 347, **370–373**, 423, 424, 438, 468, 477, 490, 496, 500  
 Rankin, Jeannette 156, 503  
 rape 76, 87, 101, 102, 213, 245, 267, 325–26, 336–37, 344, 362, 391–92, 414, 504  
 Raticon, James 487  
**rationing** xii, 3, 4–7, 20, 53, 87–88, 97–99, 122, 174–77, 223, 228–30, 301, 330–31, 332, 348, 356, **373–79**, 467, 486  
   outside of the U.S. 59–60, 160, 195, 209–11, 337, 373, 400  
 rations, military 24, 87, 103, 122, 175, 184, 398  
 Rautman, Arthur 82  
 Rawlings, Marjorie Kinnon 41  
 Rawlinson, Mabel 479  
 Ray, Martha 303  
 Ray, Randolph 264, 276, 351  
 Rayburn, Sam 76  
 Raytheon Corporation 13, 144, 146, 148, 207  
*Reader's Digest* 60, 116, 190, 283, 318, 337, 339, 442, 460, 470, 471, 484  
 Reagan, Ronald 156, 270, 279  
 Reckless, Walter 362  
**recreation** 9, 31, 33, 54, 60, 94, 107, 116, 148, 172, 297, 301–02, 307–09, 313, 315, 318, 338, 362, 372, **379–81**, 387, 450–51, 466, 482, 483, 492, 494, 501, 507  
*Recreation* 381, 413, 500  
**recruitment** 6, 34–35, 66, 120, 146, 167, 191–93, 196, 251, 255–56, 291, 299, 312, 315, 316, 318, 320–22, 332, 349, 371–72, **381–85**, 403, 411, 413–14, 418, 419, 425, 427, 440, 446, 451, 461, 465–66, 470, 475, 482, 494, 496, 498, 500–01, 504–05, 509  
**Red Cross 385–89**  
   in the U.S. 19, 24, 46, 47, 48, 54, 62, 101, 128, 154, 173, 199, 203, 217–18, 221, 301, 303, 321, 355, 380, 382, 385, 389, 440, 449, 465–66, 468, 488, 494, 509  
   outside of the U.S. 26, 38, 60, 62, 75, 87, 107, 117, 120, 127, 158–64, 167, 172, 176, 239, 267, 273, 281–82, 314, 319, 326, 327, 328, 337, 338, 343, 357, 358, 381, 390, 391, 415, 431, 473, 491  
 Redgrave, Vanessa 303  
 Redmond, Coralee 433  
 Redmond, Juanita 37–39, 100, 101, 213, 336, 337, 350, 386  
 Rees, Mina 403  
**refugees** xii, 46, 52, 81, 150, 178–81, 184, 200, 201, 205, 242, 289, 310, 325–26, 332, 336, 339, 351, 364, 386, 387, 388, **389–93**, 420–21, 440, 449, 503, 508
- Reiling, Thelma 314  
 Reiman, Richard 311  
 Reindel, Edna 28  
 relative rank, *see* rank  
 rent, *see* housing; landlords  
 Republican Party/Republicans 23, 29–31, 48–49, 137, 139, 156, 186, 213, 243, 246, 249, 278, 279, 324, 333, 334, 393–94, 396, 399, 416, 448  
 restaurants (*see also* waitresses) 9, 54, 99, 108, 161, 192, 306, 374, 437, 470  
*Reubin James* 334  
 Reynolds, Quentin 400  
 Rhode Island 198, 278, 425, 446  
 Rice, Mildred 166  
 Ricket, Leonoe Terrell 343  
 Richards, Ellen 215  
 Ripley, Josephine 146  
 riveting, *see* defense industries  
 “Roaring Twenties” 5, 87, 88, 140, 248, 252, 261, 265, 346  
 Robb, Inez 103, 104, 319  
 Roberts, Glenna 479  
 Roberts, Mary 119  
 Robeson, Eslanda Goode 65  
 Robins, Dorothy 187, 447  
 Robinson, Evelyn Louise 292  
 Robinson, Marie Mitchell 479  
 Robinson, Marion 507  
 Rockwell, Norman 27, 399  
 Roe, Elaine 119  
**Rogers, Edith Nourse** xii, 72, 156, 186, 211, 245, 251, 278, 318, 320, 324, 371, **393–94**, 396, 414, 416, 460, 465, 478, 480, 497, 498  
 Rogers, Ginger 302  
 Rogers, Helen Reid 52, 103, 202, 205, 270  
 Rogers, Hilda 313  
 Rogers, Roy 369  
 Rohde, Ruth, *see* Owen, Ruth Bryan  
 Rommel, Erwin 316  
 Roomsburg, Pearl 166  
 Roosevelt, Eleanor (first lady's cousin) 336, 392  
**Roosevelt, Eleanor** 48, 60, 63, 76, 90, 91, 119, 130, 135, 155–56, 209, 213, 216, 242, 264, 266, 310, 319, 334, 352, 358, 390, **395–98**, 414, 417, 425, 427, 431, 443, 447, 498  
   African Americans 9, 42, 43, 135, 322, 396  
   Democratic Party 127–28, 136, 395–96  
   United Nations 187, 203, 397, 448–49, 503  
   women 23, 35, 40, 43, 66, 92, 199, 204, 103, 104, 136, 168, 183, 186, 193, 243, 246, 278, 292, 297, 324, 346, 398, 416, 440, 447, 470, 496, 503  
 Roosevelt, Franklin D. 5, 9, 11, 12, 14, 20, 28, 30, 46, 48–49, 87, 90, 122, 127, 139, 192, 201, 225, 229, 235, 242, 278, 290, 310, 321, 323, 330, 332, 342, 344, 347, 370, 396, 397, 414, 416, 420, 422, 426, 427, 430, 436, 446, 449, 453, 456, 498  
   appointments of women 23, 43, 72, 136, 187, 199, 200, 211, 310, 345, 398, 422, 447  
   partisan politics/political enemies 30–31, 33, 44, 75, 204, 243, 324, 333, 334, 413, 447, 475  
 Roosevelt, Sarah Delano 395–96  
 Roosevelt, Theodore, Jr. 396  
 Rosada, Carman Garcia 209  
 Rose, Ruth Starr 28  
 Roselius, Hilda 56  
**Rosenberg, Anna** 244, 378, 396, **398–399**  
 Rosenberg, Ethel 244, 399  
**“Rosie the Riveter”** xi, 12, 27, 191, 255, 256, 263, 302, 308, 349, 380, 383, **399–400**, 408, 440, 465  
 Ross, Mary Steele 21, 465

- Rossiter, Margaret 289, 402, 403  
 Rostov, Eugene V. 238  
 Rourke, Rita 119  
 Rozzelle, Helen 166  
 Rubenstein, Charlotte Streifer 28  
 Russell, Jane 303  
 Russell, June L. 275  
**Russian women**/Russia xii, 6, 17, 18, 29, 52, 55, 56, 90, 94, 104, 163, 165, 168, 187, 200, 206, 250, 279, 325, 326, 329, 333, 334, 347, 350, 362, 364, 378, 390, 391, **400–01**, 420, 449, 453, 475, 497  
 Rutherford, Lucy Mercer 297  
  
 Sadler, Julia Parrish 328  
 safety (*see also* civil defense) 91, 123, 141–43, 149, 167, 305–06, 345, 408–09, 444, 446, 469, 478, 482, 483–84  
 Sager, Jane 308  
 Sake, Sonoji 236  
 Salk vaccine 213  
 Sanchez, Loretta 209  
 San Antonio, *see* Texas  
 San Diego, *see* California  
 San Francisco, *see* California  
 Sanger, Margaret 44, 136, 253, 356  
 Sarah Lawrence College 177  
 Sargent, Mary Schiek 388  
 Sattlefield, Tom 427  
*Saturday Evening Post* 14, 21, 49, 60, 64, 78, 79, 101, 109, 120, 160, 190, 283, 285, 316, 338, 351, 348, 399, 432, 486, 504  
*Saturday Review* 283  
 Saverno, Louis 293  
 Savickas, Ed 365, 494  
 Sawyer, Martha 27, 350  
 Schade, Ann 327  
 Schaffter, Dorothy 496  
 Schiff, Dorothy 103, 244, 250, 448  
 Schlesinger Library 64, 84, 280  
 Schneiderman, Rose 243  
*Scholastic* 229, 275, 374  
 schools (*see also* child care, colleges) 3–4, 6, 79, 82, 233, 237, 299–300, 310–11, 311–12, 329, 395, 405, 407, 504  
 Schottland, Charles I. 260  
 Schultz, Sigrid 103, 157, 248, 439  
 Schurr, Cathleen 456  
 Schwarz, Rita 275  
*Science Newsletter* 13, 321, 403  
**scientific research and development** 14, 19, 40, 112, 114, 144–46, 173–77, 182–83, 184–85, 218–19, 257–58, 288–90, 306, 322, **402–04**, 440, 458, 463–64, 481  
 Scott, Betty 479  
 Scott, Dorothy 479  
 Scott, Nell 18  
 Sears, Mary 403  
 Seattle, *see* Washington  
 Seberg, Herbert 509  
 Seip, Margaret J. 479  
 Selby, Barbara 15  
 Selective Service, *see* draft  
 Sellin, T. 3  
 Sender, Toni 125  
*Service* 321  
 Servicemen's Dependents Allowance Act, *see* wives of servicemen  
 Servicemen's Readjustment Act, *see* GI Bill  
 Settle, Mary Lee 61, 157, 282, 387, 497  
 Severide, Eric 58  
 Severson, Helen Jo 479  
 Sewall, Patricia 329, 386  
**sexual harassment**/standards 4, 44–45, 62, 112, 152, 161, 211–12, 292, 294, 303, 314, 331, 336–37, 355, 358, 359, 361–62, 366, 379, 402, **404–06**, 413–15, 457–58, 470, 472, 478, 479, 489, 492, 501  
 Seyfert, Leona Marie  
 Shackelford, Elizabeth 310  
 Shacklette, Edith 102  
 Shakespeare & Co. 179  
 Shanklin, Christine 118  
 Shapiro, Edward S. 242  
 Shapiro, Miriam 28  
 Shapsnikoff, Anfersia 17  
 Sharon, Ethel Marie 479  
 Sharp, Evelyn 479  
 Shaver, Dorothy 442  
 Shaw, Anna Howard 120, 188  
 Shaw, Catherine 339  
 Sheetz, Carrie 119  
 Shelly, Mary Jo 398  
 Shelton, Mary C. 147  
 Sheppard-Towner Act 320  
 Shepperson, Gloria 430  
**shipbuilding industry** xi, xii, 1, 2, 6, 10, 52–5, 70, 79, 123, 148–49, 202–03, 310, 342, 363, 398–99, **406–10**, 433, 444  
 Shirer, William L. 252  
 Shizue, Mrs. Kato 329  
 Shore, Dinah 308, 379  
 Shultz, Gladys Denny 94  
 Shurr, Agnes 200  
 Sigman, Blanche 119  
**Signal Corps** 74, 111–12, 117, 118, 189, 230, 299, 317, 319, 338, 368, 403, **410–13**, 413, 430, 464, 501  
 Silver, Gertrude Thompson 479  
 Simas, Mae 487  
 Simbeck, Rob 479  
 Simon, Gysella 161  
 Sinatra, Frank 380  
 Skinner, Cornelia Otis 41  
 Skinner, Lillie Emory 75, 154  
**"slander campaign"** 36, 44, 168, 211, 269, 318–19, 356, 362, 382, 394, **413–15**, 496, 500  
 Slinger, Frances 119, 165  
 Slayton, Charles 298  
**Smedley, Agnes** 76, 104, 253, 267, **415–16**, 422, 439  
 Smith, Al 345, 396  
 Smith, Betty 41  
 Smith College 83, 95, 187, 218, 249, 280, 297, 364, 402, 481  
 Smith, Helen Huntington 108  
 Smith, Kate 308  
 Smith, Kathleen 308  
 Smith-Lever Act 216  
 Smith, Lillian 41, 396  
 Smith, Lloyd 241  
 Smith, Louise 327  
 Smith, Maggie 303  
 Smith, Margaret (Rita) 139  
 Smith, Margaret Chase 72, 156, 186, 198, 249, 278, 320, 324, 371, 396, **416–17**, 478, 481, 495, 496  
 Smith, Marian 176, 274  
 Smith, Mrs. Quincy 145  
 Smith, R. Harris 187, 188  
 Smith, Stella Makar 170  
 Smith, W.B. 230, 317, 410  
 Smithsonian Institute 241  
 Social Security 128, 135, 203, 212, 229, 249, 264, 320, 345, 346, 349, 397, 422

## INDEX

- “soldiers of production” xii, 12, 54, 108, 122, 124, 167, 255, 264, 306, 380, 476  
 Solomon, Hannah Greenbaum 243  
 Somset, Anne 62  
 Sone, Monica Itoi 233, 234, 236, 237, 238  
 Sneed, Bessie 357  
 Snodgrass, Alice Makimi 18  
 Soong, Ch’ing-ling 76, 253  
 Soong, Mai’ling, *see* Chiang, Madame  
 Sorel, Nancy Caldwell 105, 106, 163, 181, 206, 250  
 South America 20, 45, 97, 105, 174, 183, 184, 207, 242, 252, 253, 261, 279, 390, 392  
 South Carolina, 2, 42, 166, 179, 245, 291  
 South Dakota 182, 204, 311  
 Soviet Union, *see* Russia  
 Spanish-American War 24, 45, 104, 172, 174, 386  
 Sparkman Act 37, 347  
**SPARS** 6, 8–9, 36, 41, 107, 120, 153, 166, 198, 231, 270, 287, 290, 294, 297, 300, 308, 315, 371, 382, 383, 384, 403, 415, 416, **417–19**, 422–23, 458, 459, 500  
 Spaulding, Jane 193, 212  
 Special Operations Executive (British) 195, 240–41  
**spies** xii, 88, 111, 118, 178, 187–88, 195–96, 333, **420–22**, 472  
 St. Louis, *see* Missouri  
 Stalin, Joseph xii, 90, 183, 187, 325, 334, 400, 411  
 Stamme, Frank 177  
 Standard Oil Company 49, 64  
 Stanton, Elizabeth Cady 279  
 Starrett, Ann 209, 210, 229, 374, 376  
*Stars and Stripes* 108, 119, 303, 372  
 State Department 54, 58, 65, 187, 195, 198, 208, 249, 250, 267, 329, 359, 385, 389, 421, 422, 439, 447, 448  
 Staupers, Mabel 25, 175, 193, 322  
 Stein, Gertrude 179  
 Steinbeck, John 257, 302  
 Stern, Edith 223  
 Sterner, Doris 114  
 Stevenson, Adlai 397  
 Stewart, E. Louise 291  
 Stillwell, “Vinegar Joe” 103, 104, 267, 294, 421  
 Stimson, Barbara 347  
 Stimson, Henry 30, 111, 347, 414, 497  
 Stimson, Julia 173  
 Stine, Betty P. 479  
 Stinson, Katherine and Marjorie 32  
 Stogner, Norman 486  
 Stout, Irving 260  
 Stowe, Harriet Beecher 41  
 Strato Equipment Company 14, 146  
**Stratton, Dorothy** 297, 371, 418, **422–23**, 424  
**Strayhorn, Elizabeth** 116, 126, **423–24**, 499  
 Streep, Meryl 303  
**Streeter, Ruth Cheney** 89, 153, 290, 291, 292, 297, 371, **424–25**, 443  
 Stremlow, Mary V. 35, 89, 290, 291, 292, 293, 301, 424, 442, 456, 496  
**strikes** xii, 23, 88, 146, 199, 208, 320, 342, 345, **425–26**, 429, 431, 446  
 Stringer, Ann Harrell 105, 163, 325  
 Stryker, Roy 64  
 Stuart, John 287, 478  
 Student Nurse Corps, *see* Cadet Nurse Corps  
 Stuhler, Barbara 266  
 suffrage, *see* voting  
**Sullivan, Alleta/Sullivan Family** 189, 385 **426–27**  
 Sullivan, Mary Ann 119, 170, 316  
 Summersby, Kay 372  
 Sumner, Jessie xii, 334  
 Sun Yet–Sen 76, 253  
 Surgeon General 9, 44, 68, 110, 130, 159, 173, 216, 220, 322, 347, 358, 365  
*Survey* 96, 284, 356, 451  
 Swartz, Lora 80  
 Swasey, Edgar 412  
 Sweden 23, 34, 41, 58, 59, 65, 119, 121, 135, 200, 289, 302, 358, 420, 439, 503  
 Sweedy, Helen 71  
 Swenson, Rosalie 119  
 Switzerland 34, 58, 59, 152, 187, 205, 249, 385–86, 420, 421, 422, 446, 448, 503, 507  
 Syler, Carrie 147  
 Syter, William 328  
 Szold, Henrietta 243, 389  
 Tamura, Linda 236, 237  
 Tape, Ruby Kim 86  
 Taylor, Frank 405  
 Taylor, Paul 261  
 Taylor, Toni 284, 365  
*Taylor vs. Louisiana* 245  
**teachers** 14, 16, 17, 33, 54, 69, 81, 94, 95, 112, 122, 126, 152, 160, 187, 196, 237, 260, 274–75, 302, 343, 359, 369, 405, 408, 416, 423, **428–30**, 430, 446, 475, 476, 483  
**telephone operators/telephones** 10, 53, 57, 70, 71, 73, 74, 91, 105, 109, 196, 199–200, 201, 225, 227, 229, 230, 293, 254, 257, 259, 292, 293, 299, 304, 317, 318, 343, 368, 383, 398, 399, 410–11, 413, 416, 426, **430–31**, 437, 482  
 television 20, 97, 144, 282, 301, 352, 398, 425  
 Telkes, Maria 403  
 Temple, Shirley 302  
 Tenenbaum, Samuel 132, 283  
 Tennessee 20, 23, 30, 71, 161, 177, 202, 272, 289, 301, 380, 424, 481, 482, 507  
 Terasaki, Gwen 359  
 Terrell, Mary Church 11  
 tests, military/civil service 9, 10, 13, 34, 126, 130, 192, 247, 262, 299, 306, 310, 364, 409, 460, 477, 501, 502  
 Texas 7, 31–32, 46, 53, 92–93, 104, 119, 146, 166, 241, 249, 293, 405, 412, 476–77, 504  
     Dallas/Fort Worth 52, 147, 166, 177, 277, 407, 408  
     Houston 31, 92, 211–12, 476  
     San Antonio 54, 71, 208, 214, 258  
 Thaden, Louise 32, 89, 438  
 Thomas, Dorothy Swaine 238  
**Thompson, Dorothy** xii, 103, 157, 190, 248, 265, 278, 284, 332, 352, 353, 389, 396, **431–32**, 439, 448  
 Thompson’s Restaurant 11  
 Thomsen, Rigmores Risberg 503  
 Thorp, Frances 221  
 Thorpe, Amy Elizabeth 421  
 Tilley, John 153, 418, 419  
*Time* 44, 73, 105, 147, 153, 160, 185, 212, 225, 272, 274, 277, 283, 287, 291, 297, 298, 347, 363, 365, 382, 405, 413, 414, 434, 437, 442, 443, 459, 478, 479, 481, 484, 501  
 Time/Life Corporation 103, 104, 105  
 Todd Shipyards 141, 148, 202, 444  
 Toevs, Marion 479  
 Togaski, Yoshiye 237  
 Toklas, Alice 179  
**Tokyo Rose** 33, 231, 296, 369, **432–33**  
 Tolan, John H. 235  
 Tolman, Ruth 364  
 Tomara, Sonia 77, 104, 161, 180, 439  
 Tomblin, Barbara 380, 381, 457, 508



- Tomlin, Lily 303  
 Torguri, Ikuko "Iva" 432  
 Toscani, Arturo 21, 380  
 Towle, Katherine A. 291, 398, 425, 496  
 Townsend, Kenneth Williams 312  
 Townscent, Eleena 322  
 TRACE (Transatlantic Children's Enterprise) 474  
 Trans World Airlines (TWA) 13, 14  
 Traugott, Lillian 420  
**travel** xii, 9, 54, 64, 71, 74, 98, 116, 192, 200, 276, 311, 313, 314, 317, 318, 346, 348, 363, 377, 387, 418, **433–36**, 469, 470, 473, 489, 501  
*Travel* 283, 431  
**Travelers Aid** 192, 434, 435, **436–37**, 449, 470, 507  
 Treadwell, Mattie, 8, 9, 11, 108, 120, 121, 189, 209, 211, 236, 248, 263, 269, 272, 275, 287, 297, 299, 300, 303, 306, 312, 317, 318, 326, 328, 338, 347, 362, 365, 366, 367, 372, 379, 410, 411, 412, 413, 414, 418, 424, 425, 429, 438, 457, 473, 490, 495, 496–97, 498  
 Treasury Department 50, 312, 348, 399, 419, 429, 489, 498, 499, 501, 502  
 Trebig, Mary E. 479  
 Treidler, Adolph 495  
 Trigg, Muriel Van Tyul 259  
 Truman, Harry S. 49, 94, 121, 137, 169, 186, 196, 229, 342, 346, 389, 397, 398, 411, 447, 448, 451, 453, 455, 456, 495, 496  
 Tucker, Lael 105, 106  
 Tucker, Sherrie 36, 308  
 Tully, Grace 420  
 Tunner, William 277  
 Turner, Hilda 429  
 Turner, Lana 303  
 Twomey, Christina 357  
 Tyler, Alice 42  
 typists/stenographers 6, 74, 84, 191–92, 237, 247, 256, 265, 291, 299, 317, 343, 372, 411, 438, 459, 484, 490  
  
 Ullom, Madeline 102  
**underutilization** xii, 9, 32, 37, 65, 87, 89, 92, 106, 114, 145, 147, 190, 196, 207, 216, 231, 250, 262–63, 267, 288, 321, 324, 331, 332, 346, 366, 372, 403, 404, 421–22, 423, 429, **438–41**, 460, 475, 477–78, 490, 496  
 uniforms 441–44  
   military 36, 45, 93, 122, 276, 290–91, 300, 314, 366–67, 418, 421, 424, 435, 468, 477, 482, 486, 499  
   non-military 22, 69, 141–43, 216, 386, 409, 494–95, 505  
**unions** xii, 10, 23, 30, 40, 144, 146, 155, 178, 186, 279, 305, 320, 342, 345–46, 355, 363, 396, 409, 425–27, 429, 430, 433, 441, **444–46**, 475  
**United Nations** xii, 34, 43, 50, 137, 187, 203, 243, 249, 266, 297, 334, 346, 354, 364, 370, 397, 411, **446–49**, 454, 460, 503  
 United Press/United Press International 103–05, 163  
 Unset, Sigrid 41, 252, 391  
 U.S. Employment Service 30, 403, 440  
*U.S. News* 132, 440  
 U.S. Public Health Service 48–49, 68, 326, 386, 402, 456  
 U.S. Supreme Court 155, 236, 245, 262  
**USO (United Services Organization)** 9, 11, 17, 20, 107–09, 132, 139, 193, 306, 308, 309, 344, 362, 370, 379, 380, 387, 406, 413, 431, 434, 435, 437, 443, **449–52**, 466, 507–08  
*USS Algonquin* 435  
*USS Benevolence* 219, 328, 339–40, 455  
*USS Comfort* 165, 167, 316, 339  
*USS Constitution* 219  
*USS Juneau* 426–27  
*USS Missouri* 455  
  
*USS Solace* 118, 316, 339  
 Utah 236, 237, 241, 485  
 Utinsky, Margaret 336, 357, 387  
  
 Van Coutren, Emma and Helen 272, 369  
 Vandenberg, Arthur 448  
 Van Hying, Lyrl 334  
*Vanity Fair* 190, 278  
 Vann, Jesse 385  
 Van Straten, Florence 403  
 Vassar College 40, 218, 276, 279, 280, 297  
 Vaughn, Elizabeth 357  
 Vaughn, Mary Pitchard 145  
 Vaught, Wilma xi, 139, 423  
**V-E Day** 118, 163, 166, 180, 324, 326, 447, **453–54**, 457  
**V-J Day** 327, 328, 447, **454–56**  
 Velen, Elizabeth Dailey 454  
**venereal disease** xii, 44, 211, 221, 287, 297, 325, 355, 362, 379, **456–58**  
 Vergas, Marianne 177, 479  
 Vermont 30, 35, 399, 432, 506  
**veterans/Veterans Administration** 3, 41, 63–64, 95–96, 127–29, 185–86, 218, 263, 265, 297, 302, 334, 352–53, 365, 388, 394, 397, 410, 419, **459–61**, 479, 493, 495  
**victory gardens** 81, 214, 216, 223, 284, **461–63**  
 "Victory Girls" 295, 362, 457  
 Vietnam War i, 26, 47, 50, 65, 77, 184, 189, 206, 270, 416, 448  
*Vigrid* 281, 386  
 Villard, Oswald Garrison 30, 248  
**V-Mail** **463–65**  
 Vining, Elizabeth Gray 329  
 Vinogradoff, Philippe 121  
 Virden, Jenel 457, 472, 473  
 Virginia 45, 47, 52, 54, 88, 134, 187, 214, 225, 231, 250, 290, 292, 301, 362, 367, 376, 384, 407, 412, 414, 436, 482  
 vitamins 7, 115, 130, 148, 174, 337, 358, 386  
*Vogue* 105, 278  
 Voight, Hanna 355, 390  
**volunteers** 21–22, 47, 115, 142, 162, 201, 203, 208, 220, 221, 243–44, 267, 302, 313, 321, 329, 331, 333, 370, 377, 380, 385–88, 399, 406, 437, 440, 443, 449–50, 459, **463–67**, 504–05  
 Von Miklos, Josephine 2, 123, 149, 258, 304, 383, 406, 407, 408, 440, 465  
 Von Neumann, Karla and John 289  
 Von Suttner, Bertha 34  
 Vorse, Mary Heaton 148, 226, 258, 259, 306, 380  
 voting/suffrage 18, 155–57, 178, 207, 279, 329, 335, 345, 377, 393, 395, 431, 503  
 Vultee Aircraft 1, 147, 285–86  
  
 WAAF (British) 61, 157, 497  
 Wadsworth, Joseph 30  
 WAF (Women in the [postwar] Air Force) 496  
**WAFS (Women's Auxiliary Ferrying Squadron)** 32, 88, 92, 177, 276–77, 287, 303, 438, 441, 459, 466, **468–470**, 476–77, 496, 497  
 Wagner, Lilya 104, 105, 168, 250  
 Wainwright, Jonathan 100, 101  
 Wainwright, Lucy 381  
**waitresses** 4, 70, 126, 135, 460, **470–71**  
 Wald, Lillian 20  
 Walker, Mary 118, 346  
 Walker, Jeanette 275  
**Wallace, Lila Bell Atcheson** 190, 283, **471**  
 Wallach, Erica, *see* Glaser, Erica  
 Waller, Willard 62, 296

## INDEX

- Wallis Simpson (Duchess of Windsor) 62–63, 179, 249–50  
 Walsh, David Ignatius 484  
 Walters, Herbert 272  
 WAMS (Women in Airline Maintenance) 14, 494  
 Wandrey, June 158, 159  
 Wannamaker, Pearl 329  
**war brides** 62, 187, 327, 388, 438, **471–74**, 492  
**War Cake** 375, **474–75**  
 War Department 12, 25, 40, 49, 53, 83, 104, 121, 125, 127, 134, 142, 144, 191, 197, 211–12, 216, 236, 242, 270, 284, 288, 292, 306, 313, 314, 321, 324, 326, 338, 344, 347, 356, 361, 364, 371, 372, 382, 388, 394, 397, 403, 416, 424, 427, 439, 458, 469, 487, 488, 495, 498, 499  
 War Food Administration, *see* food; rationing  
**War Manpower Commission** 30, 66, 79, 149, 190, 203–04, 256, 264, 311, 346, 349, 383, 384, 398, 426, 429, 440, 465, **475–76**  
 War Relocation Authority 235–38, 261  
 War Writers Board 332, 447  
 Waring, Fred 292  
 Warlick, Ruth 166  
 Warne, Colston E. 342  
 Warner, Dorothy 142, 305, 406  
 Warren, Earl 234  
 Warren, James R. 235, 453  
 Washburn, Lois LaFayette 334  
 Washington 113, 132, 226, 233–38, 289, 304, 305, 360, 433, 479, 504, 506, 508, 509  
     Seattle 52, 55, 122, 238, 313, 315, 362, 383, 407, 429, 453, 508  
 Washington, DC 11, 22, 23, 72, 142, 156, 319, 334, 431, 435, 456  
     as a boom town 6, 43, 52, 54, 191–93, 225, 450  
     as a headquarters 3, 17, 18, 21, 35, 37, 45–46, 64, 66, 108, 112, 292, 300, 412, 418, 421, 447, 468, 475, 482–83, 498, 505, 507  
     as a home/retirement locale 34, 47, 48, 49, 58, 63, 64, 166, 173, 182, 198, 199, 246, 277, 279, 281, 346, 358, 387, 396, 422  
 Washington, George 29, 119, 137  
*Washington Herald* 103, 448  
 Washington, Martha 29, 69, 489  
*Washington Post*, 52, 196, 397  
*Washington Star* 169, 414  
**WASP (Women Airforce Service Pilots)** 25, 31–32, 40–41, 61, 86, 88, 92–93, 120, 131, 165, 177–78, 207, 275, 287–88, 371, 387, 404, 424, 438, 441, 459, 466, 469, **476–80**, 497  
 Wasson, Betty 103, 369  
 Waterford, Van 357  
 Watson, Georgia B. 319  
**WAVES (Women Accepted for Voluntary Emergency Service)**, xi, 8–9, 15, 17, 35–36, 46, 50, 53, 83, 86, 108, 112, 120, 129, 145, 201, 231, 270, 274, 275, 287, 289, 290–91, 294, 300, 306, 312, 315, 344, 350, 402, 403, 404, 417, 422, 425, 427, 429, 441, 442, 443, 450, 456, 458, 477, **480–85**, 494, 495–96, 498  
     advertising/recruitment 6, 153–54, 251, 308, 382, 384, 413  
     pay/limitations 18, 41, 153–54, 166, 371–72, 438, 481, 500  
     formation 61, 73, 93, 153, 139, 187, 211, 283, 290, 416, 466  
     housing/training 95, 141, 226, 289, 297, 402–03  
     leaders 197–98, 218–19, 173, 185, 297–98, 344, 459  
 Wayman, Martha Alice 74  
 Weather Bureau 112, 404  
 Webster, Louise 479  
**weddings** 39, 97, 138, 183, 275–76, 295–96, 298, 359, 443, 471, **485–87**  
 Wellesley College 34, 41, 76, 95, 126, 187, 297, 329, 481  
 Wells, H.G. 183  
 Wells, Marguarite 266  
 Welsh, Mary 60, 104  
 Welty, Eudora 42  
 Welz, Bonnie Jean 479  
 West, Jessamyn 140  
 West Virginia 33, 45, 52, 64, 134, 220, 305, 433  
 Westinghouse Corporation 10, 144, 399  
 Weston, Mary Ann 312  
 Wharton, Don 12, 122, 286, 405  
 White House (as a place) 39, 76–77, 101, 115, 118, 193, 241, 333  
 Whitehouse, Vera 449  
 White, Jennifer 104, 392  
 Whitfield, Pauline 17  
 Whitman, Howard 352  
 Whitney Galley 28  
 Whittle, Reba 360  
 Whyte, Edith 198  
**widows**, 83, 189, 197, 219, 229, 296, 341, 390, 401, 416, 427, 479, **488–90**  
 Wiese, Selene 74, 271, 337, 340, 412, 436, 454, 455, 464, 493  
 Wilder, Margaret Buell 74, 273, 296, 302, 491, 492  
 Wilk, Regina 456  
 Wilkes, Private (no first name available) 464  
 Wilkie, Wendell 278  
 Wilkinson, Virginia S. 6, 225, 407, 408  
 Willard, Emma 279  
 Willey, Bonnie 106  
 Williams, Anna 102, 196  
 Williams, Bonnie 166  
 Williams, D.T. 291  
 Williams, Faith 142  
 Williams, Kathleen Broome 403, 404, 440  
**Wilson, Anna W.** 196, **490**  
 Wilson, Forrest 41  
 Wilson, Paul 346  
 Wilson, Woodrow 23, 156, 188, 199, 396, 410, 446  
 Winchell, Walter 433  
 Windham, Emma Jane Burrows, 120, 166, 438  
 Winfield, Patricia 474  
 WINS (Women in National Service) 465  
 Winslow, Ola Elizabeth 41  
 Winsor, Duke of (Edward VIII) 62–63, 179, 249–50  
 Winsor, Kathleen 41, 140  
 WIRES (Women in Radio and Electrical Service) 410, 494  
 Wisconsin 19, 23, 64, 95, 110, 119, 166, 172, 184, 186, 238, 249, 270, 300, 304, 313, 380, 442, 455, 482  
 Wise, Nancy Baker and Christy Wise 368  
 Wiskerton, Valera Vaubel 201, 344  
 Wisse, Ruth 242  
**wives of servicemen** (*see also* camp followers) xii, 29, 70–72, 80–83, 127–28, 138–39, 176, 255, 296, 301, 331, 356, 365, 387–87, 407, 433–34, 437, 440, 451, 465, 473, 488–90, **490–94**, 498  
     allotments/benefits 19, 40–41, 262, 388  
     housing 9, 54, 224–27, 489, 508  
**Woman Ordnance Worker (WOW)** 306, 380, 413, 465, **494–95**  
*Woman's Home Companion* 29, 65, 78, 105, 168, 177, 187, 201, 264, 284, 334, 347, 351, 384, 470, 473, 478, 489, 504  
 Woman's Party 155, 279  
 Women in Military Service to America, Inc. xi, 84, 423  
 Women's Air Derby 32, 89  
**Women's Armed Forces Integration Act** 41, 49, 58, 115, 127, 197, 198, 270, 347, 399, 416, 419, 459, **495–97**, 502, 509  
 Women's Army Auxiliary Corps/Women's Army Corps (WAAC/WAC) xi, 17, 25, 35, 85, 95, 115–16, 120, 130, 153–54, 166, 175, 220, 226, 231, 244, 247, 248, 251–52, 263, 287, 289, 297, 300, 306, 312, 313, 315, 324, 347, 365, 366, 367, 388, 411, 416, 417, 421, 425, 441, 458, 480, 481, 487, 494, 495–96, **497–503**

- advertising/recruitment 2, 6, 71, 236, 303, 308, 381–84, 414, 419, 443
- African-American women 2, 8–9, 43, 116, 299–300, 384, 414
- benefits/pay/rank 19, 153–54, 196, 343, 371–72, 481
- formation 43, 114, 125–27, 283, 294, 311, 393–94, 410 413, 465, 468
- leaders 57–58, 110–11, 114–15, 189–90, 196–97, 211–13, 423–24, 490
- overseas 3, 8, 16, 74, 117–18, 120, 152, 157–64, 168, 230, 237, 271, 317, 326, 327–28, 338–40, 344, 368, 381, 395, 454, 455, 473
- sexual standards/behavior 44, 107–09, 269–71, 356, 362, 404–05, 413–15, 457
- Women's Bureau (Department of Labor) 9, 23, 135, 147, 148, 256, 264, 310, 342, 348, 409, 446
- women's history (as a field of scholarly research) xi, 35, 47, 189, 197, 279–80, 358, 359, 360, 392, 406
- Women's International League for Peace and Freedom** xii, 34, 333, 354, 389, 446, 447–48, **503–04**
- Women's Land Army** 61, 92, 173, 194–95, 208, 263, 285, 293, 342, 376, 384, 429, 440, 461, 465, **504–07**
- Women's Medical College of Pennsylvania 110, 347
- Wong, Jit 86
- Wood, Betty Taylor 479
- Wood, Dorothy 221
- Wood, Martha 453
- Woodman, Mildred Clark 343, 344
- Woods, Leona 289
- Woodward, Ellen 329, 396
- Works Progress Administration (WPA) 21, 78, 260, 276
- World Congress of Representative Women 20
- World War I xii, 8, 24, 34, 45, 48, 50, 90, 113, 123, 124, 127, 130, 132, 150, 151, 173, 178, 182, 188, 197, 199, 209, 211, 242, 290, 320, 330, 361, 371, 386, 393, 396, 410, 446, 456, 472, 480, 497, 503, 507
- World Youth Unity 137
- WRENS (British) 61, 283, 497
- Wright Brothers 32, 88, 207
- Wrigley, Phillip/Wrigley Field, 19–20
- Wu, Chien Shiung 289
- Wu, Yi-fang 447
- Wyoming 85, 183, 236, 237
- Yank* 340
- Yale University 30, 110, 185, 218, 372
- Yaroeh, Betty 480
- Yeager, Chuck 94
- Yellin, Emily 270, 333, 334, 355, 362, 383, 402, 426, 466, 471, 475
- Yeomen F 197, 290, 410, 480
- Young, Eunice 101, 386, 392
- Young, Anne Marie, 10, 121, 305
- Yu, Maochun 422
- Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA)** xii, 11, 76, 193, 203, 262, 313, 389, 436, 437, 447, 449, 466, **507–08**
- Zeller, Varina** xii, **509**